



# BELARUSIAN REVIEW



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## EDITORIAL

### Democratization of Belarus: Can Russia Be Trusted As Partner?

President George Bush, in his 2005 inaugural speech, announced that the spread of liberty and democracy worldwide would be among his new policies. With respect to Belarus, Secretary Condoleezza Rice defined this policy in some detail during her April visit to Vilnius, and President Bush did the same in May during his stop in Riga on his trip to Moscow. Their statements were covered by this writer in the summer issue of the *Review* under the title "President Bush and Secretary Rice Push for Democracy in Belarus." The essence of those statements was that the last dictatorship in Europe needs to be replaced by a democracy, and that the US was ready to work toward that end. To make this happen, the US Congress budgeted \$30 million for the fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

How to achieve this was left up to the State Department to define. The direction of this new US policy was first revealed in Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried's July 11 Warsaw interview with BelaPAN, an independent Belarusian news agency. Overall, the interview offers some insight into how the US plans to solve the Belarus problem. The approach seems to be soft, avoiding anything radical, and seeing what happens during the 2006 presidential election.

With respect to Russia's role in this situation, Mr. Fried says: **"[We] hope that Russia will work to support freedom in Belarus because Russia, I believe, is a great friend of Belarus as it shows to be. President Bush and President Putin have good personal relations. We believe that cooperation with Russia can help democracy in Belarus and we hope the Russians will work to support the Belarusian people."**

Mr. Fried also said that dictatorships do not last forever and made it clear that if Lukashenka were to run and win in 2006, the US would not recognize that election as valid in view of the fact the US had not recognized the 2004 referendum that let Lukashenka run for a third term. Mr. Fried was careful not to say what the US would do if Lukashenka ran and the international monitoring community decided the election was free and fair.

The West, of course, would not recognize fraudulent results. But so what? Starting with the 1996 referendum, the West did not recognize any subsequent referenda/elections, declaring them fraudulent, while, at the same time, Russia, an interested and biased party, recognized all of them as legal and valid and has supported Lukashenka's stay in power.

Therefore, we have good reason to believe that **Russia is part of the problem, not the solution**, and history proves that. Russia has not been a friend of Belarus since the time of its total incorporation into the Russian Empire at the end of the 18th century. The territory known today as Belarus became a colony of Russia. During the past two centuries Russia's interests in Belarus have not changed. The colony has remained a colony subjected to fierce Russification and denationalization, which has been extended and brutally enforced under Russia's present client, President Lukashenka. In fact, Belarus is on the verge of being reintegrated back into Russia.

At this very moment, Russia is busy working on how to reintegrate Belarus into Russia under the cover of a "union state." This year alone there have been over half a dozen meetings between high officials of Russia and Belarus, including several private meetings between Putin and Lukashenka, to discuss accelerating the process of finalizing the draft of the union constitution and introducing the Russian ruble as a common currency. We think all these moves are designed to rush the completion of the union state project so as to preempt the US/EU drive for democracy in Belarus and keep Lukashenka in power.

It was reported that on September 9, Mr. Lukashenka was quite exuberant when he said: "Today it is evident to anyone that our integration has taken place. The Belarus-Russia union has become a geopolitical reality," and further, "The adoption of the union state's constitution would bring the two states even closer to each other..."

Against this background it is unrealistic to expect Russia to give up its drive to reintegrate Belarus into Russia or to work, as the West hopes, to support the spread of freedom and democracy in Belarus. We believe it is wishful thinking to rely on Mr. Putin's goodwill to bring freedom and democracy to Belarus just because he has a good personal relationship with Mr. Bush. We do not doubt Mr. Bush's sincere desire to help Belarus, but we do not know what Mr. Putin promised regarding Belarus during their private meetings in Bratislava and Moscow that justifies the US's confidence that Russia will indeed promote democracy in Belarus.

We think Belarus' independence, sovereignty and the territorial integrity are very much at stake if the union state does materialize. If this happens, there will be no chance to pull Belarus back from Russia's embrace. We hope that the US and EU realize this and apply enough pressure on Russia to make it abide by the commitment it made to respect "the independence and sovereignty and the existing borders of the Republic of Belarus" by signing the 1994 memorandum on security assurances at the Budapest CSCE Summit in accordance with the 1975 CSCE Helsinki Final Act.

Joe Arciuch  
Editor-at-Large

## From the Publisher

This year the subject of Belarus and the worsening democracy and human rights situation in the country has gained greater attention worldwide. It resulted in increased funding and new funding proposals, both in Europe and in the United States for external broadcasting directed to Belarus and for overall advancement of democracy there, including the printed media and the development of political party activity

Such new funding can also help our publication to have a greater impact in Belarus and to raise awareness in the outside world about the growing dictatorship there and threatening annexation. Four years ago the *Belarusian Review* team's concerted effort to secure grant assistance was met with an almost total lack of interest or adequate response from a variety of institutions, both governmental and private. Continued publishing remained dependent almost solely on the generosity of many subscribers.

We plan to start a new campaign at the end of this year with the view of securing some outside support in making BR a better and more effective publication. We are calling on our readers to help us define the most important tasks and ideas. They could include some of the following, and others:

- Greater frequency, larger size, wider distribution and better appearance;
- Partial translation into Belarusian and greater distribution within Belarus;
- More original material in print and on Internet, possible chatrooms and seminars;
- Conducting of live seminars by our staff and authors in diaspora and in Belarus...

Please respond by e-mail or letter to our addresses in US and Europe, by indicating which of the above you consider most important, by suggesting other ideas and providing some concrete approaches in support of them..

The list of our larger contributors in 2005 was joined recently by Eugene Kazan.

If you have not already renewed your subscription, please do not delay. Your interest and support is needed.

## QUOTES of QUARTER

"I will defend my nation, my state, and the presidential power myself, with a weapon in my hands, and **alone, if necessary.**"

President **Lukashenka's** answer to a question about his "personal dream" in his interview with Russian TV program "TV Center" on July 2, 2005. (Free Belarus Newsletter, July 14-26)

"Capital punishment can and should be used as a preventive measure"

Chairman of the Constitutional Court of Belarus, **Ryhor Vasilevich**, at a press conference in Minsk, on July 15, 2005. (Free Belarus Newsletter, July 14-26)

## FEATURES

### World Elite Condemns the Last Totalitarian Country in Europe

*Internationally renowned politicians and leading personalities made a statement condemning the totalitarian regime of Alaksandr Lukashenka.*

Although it may seem that in our present time there are no important issues we are not aware of, there are many significant facts which are unknown or known only to a limited number of people. One of those "information black holes" has been, for quite a long time, Belarus, situated on the very eastern borders of Europe.

This country of ten million inhabitants has been for 11 years ruled by Alexander Lukashenka for whom the governance means extensive abuse of the basic human and citizens' rights on daily basis, removal and imprisonment of his opponents and journalists, and deception of people by mass media under his control.

Last autumn in a bogus referendum Lukashenka had removed the two consecutive terms limit on presidency and thus made the first step to prolong his rule beyond 2006 when his current term expires. Since then, for a number of months, largely unnoticed by most media and politicians in the democratic world, the last remains of non-governmental organizations, independent press and political parties that could thwart the plans of Belarus' autocrat to prolong his rule ad infinitum, are systematically being liquidated. The information blockade of the country is growing, opportunities for young people to study abroad are being limited, and the last independent daily *Narodnaja Vola* is about to be closed. Alexander Lukashenka can get away with all of this not only due to unsavory legacy of totally decimated post-soviet social and societal structures, but also due to lack of interest in the fate of Belarus on the part of democratic countries.

We are, therefore, convinced that it is necessary to make use of every opportunity to break through this wall of indifference and inability on the part of the democratic community in order to take a stand against this post-soviet autocrat and his efforts to totally suppress the remains of independent initiatives in Belarus. At the same time it is necessary to continue in developing contacts and cooperation with Belarus' independent initiatives.

European Union that so far has not been able to support efforts designed to build Belarus based on democratic values, should speedily seek such instruments that enable this process. At the same time the EU should fully open its exchange and educational for democratically oriented young people of Belarus. The EU should, together with Ukraine, quickly react to the proposal by EU parliamentarians Janusz Onyszkiewicz and Bogdan Klich to enable the people of Belarus an access to non-censored, non-manipulated information through radio and TV broadcasts from neighboring countries.

We call for creating a common strategy for the EU, USA and all other democratic countries that ought to be interested in the democratization of Belarus.

Signed by:

Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, Richard von Weizsäcker, former president of Germany, Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, and UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Frederic Willem de Klerk, former president of the Republic of South Africa, Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, a long-time fighter for democratization of the Near East, Mike Moore, former prime minister of New Zealand, George Soros, president of the Open Society Institute, Desmond Tutu, archbishop and Nobel prize winner, Yohei Sasakawa, president of the Sasakawa Foundation, the largest charity in Japan, Andre Glucksmann, well-known French philosopher and political writer, Vartan Gregorian, a historian and president of the "Carnegie Corporation of New York," and others.

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## Memorandum by the Executive Council of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic

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The Executive Council of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, having considered the results of the European Commission tender whereby the contract for radio broadcasts to Belarus was granted to the Deutsche Welle Russian service:

- **recognises** the need for international assistance to provide alternative sources of information for Belarusians who have been effectively isolated for a decade from unbiased information and exposed to false propaganda by the regime of A. Lukashenka;
- **welcomes** the willingness of European institutions to assist the Belarusian people in this need;
- **acknowledges** the promotion of a democratic political culture based on European standards and values, and the strengthening of the sense of unity of the Belarusian nation with the family of the democratic nations of Europe, as the core principle and objective for achieving a free and democratic Belarus.

At the same time the Executive Council of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic:

- **asserts** that the issue of the Belarusian language is an indispensable condition of the country's democratisation. In this respect, the promotion of a democratic political culture in Belarus based on European standards necessitates encouraging in the public consciousness all those aspects of the national legacy that unite Belarus with Europe. This is in contrast to the legacy of Soviet Russification in public

life in Belarus and to the policy of the current regime, which, since it came to power in 1994, has for political reasons encouraged and imposed forcible re-Russification;

- **observes** that there has been no such progress in encouraging a public awareness of Belarus' kinship with Europe except based on the national consciousness and public culture that historically developed while within the European context, and hence preserving a clear sense of belonging to it. By contrast, no public legacy in Belarus that it shares with the Soviet Union or the Russian empire can foster a sense of kinship with Europe. For which reason the present regime in Belarus forces upon it all the aspects of that Soviet/Russian legacy;

- **asserts** with respect to the choice of language for these broadcasts, that the fact that Russian has been widely used in Belarus under foreign rule and under Lukashenka does not render it most appropriate for the stated objectives. Belarusian is equally commonly understood (as is evidenced by official census data) and retains the status of an official language. Since specific historical-political significance is inherent for languages in Belarus, the choice of language can not be politically-neutral;

- **points out** in addition that, with respect to the use of Russian for radio broadcasts sponsored by European Commission for Belarus, such double standards in the treatment of a nation's indigenous language, in comparison with the policies applied to neighbouring countries, are unjustified and unacceptable. For example, the Deutsche Welle has a special Ukrainian service, despite that the level of Russification in Ukraine is comparable with that in Belarus. The specified approach also contradicts the entire experience of successful democratisation in neighbouring post-Communist countries which has invariably involved discouraging Soviet legacies in all areas of public and political life and reasserting a new national European identity on the basis of national historical cultures;

- **observes** that the public response in Belarus to the said decision was protest particularly amongst the politically active sector of the public; this is widely perceived as a factor tending to perpetuate the Soviet legacy of Russification in Belarus and by implication protracting the country's present political conditions.

The Executive Council of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic therefore concludes that under the present conditions the project of broadcasting to Belarus not in Belarusian will not effectively contribute to attaining its objectives, since the specific political significance attached in the realities of Belarus to the Russian language critically compromises its essential purposes.

The Executive Council of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic for the specified reasons regrets the decision of the European Commission to approve the broadcasting service for Belarus in its present linguistic parameters and calls for a most urgent review of the said decision in order to secure that the format of the broadcasting service may fully conform to the purpose of achieving a free and democratic Belarus.

## Interview with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried

(Excerpts)

*Interview by Ales Lipay and Yuri Shirocky, BelaPAN Information Company, Warsaw, 11 July 2005*

*Daniel Fried took the oath of office as Assistant Secretary of State on May 5, 2005. Before taking the helm of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Ambassador Fried served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council since January 22, 2001.*

*Ambassador Fried was Principal Deputy Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the New Independent States from May 2000 until January 2001. He was Ambassador to Poland from November 1997 until May 2000.*

*Daniel Fried, of Washington, DC, began his career with the Foreign Service in 1977. He served in a variety of posts at the State Department and in various Embassies in Europe. From 1993 until 1997 he served on the staff of the National Security Council, first as a Director and then as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Central and Eastern Europe. At the White House, he was active in designing U.S. policy on Euroatlantic security, including NATO enlargement and the Russia-NATO relationship.*

*— Mr. Fried, it has been fourteen years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and the United States. However, over the past years, relations in the political field have not improved, but worsened. Belarus often responds to criticism concerning democratization and human rights in Belarus by saying that Washington has a double standard. Don't you think that it is time for both countries to look for a compromise in order to improve relations?*

I don't know what compromise means in this context. We believe that the Belarusian people like every people in the world have a right to live in freedom. We believe that the Belarusian people have a right to freedom, which is a birthright of every person in the world. What does compromise mean? Does it mean that the Belarusians should not live in freedom? Or they should live in partial freedom? I don't understand what that means. What we just like to say, we support the Belarusian people. We support the Belarusian nation and its development. We want it to be secure. We want the Belarusian people to be prosperous. We want the Belarusian people to be free. I don't know what part of it you would wish to compromise.

We would like to see the Belarusian government moving in a democratic direction. We would be very patient if we saw targeted movement on the part of the government of Belarus. We also know that democracy takes many forms. But common to all democracies is freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to travel, a government, which is responsible to its people through free elections, and a rule of law. I don't know which of those principles should be compromised on. But if we saw government moving in that direction, we would be very pleased.

*— On May 11 President George Bush signed a supplement to the 2005 budget that allocates an additional \$5 million for democracy programs in Belarus. This is not the first U.S. contribution to civil society in Belarus. At the same time, according to the Department of State, there have been no improvements in the fields of human rights and democratization in Belarus. Does that mean that the means provided by your country have been spent inefficiently or do you see other reasons?*

Well, indeed, we are increasing our support for civil society in Belarus. I regret very much that there has not been more reform in Belarus. I think the people of Belarus deserve it. I think freedom is both good in itself and freedom brings greater prosperity.

You are asking an interesting question about effectiveness of assistance to civil society. And of course we know that for many years in Eastern Europe during the cold war assistance did not produce any measurable results and all of a sudden the result came very quickly in 1989-91.

So I don't know the answer and history will judge the effectiveness but I think it is important that we support the people of Belarus and we intend to do so.

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*— The main political issue of 2006, for Belarusians, is the presidential election. As is well known, during the referendum of October 17, 2004, the Belarusian electorate, according to official sources, gave Alexander Lukashenko the right to run for president again. Does that mean that if Lukashenko chooses to take part in these elections, the United States will consider them illegitimate? What changes should be made, according to the US and the European Union, in order to make elections in Belarus fair and transparent? Will the US and EU be pressing for such changes and if so, in what ways?*

We do not consider that that referendum was conducted in a free and fair manner. Therefore we do not recognize the results of that referendum. We do not think that a referendum conducted in undemocratic way has validity. If the government of Belarus wishes to be considered as a good partner, it should take steps immediately to behave in a way that respects its own constitution and the principles of democracy that Belarus has agreed to observe as a member of the OSCE. Belarus has undertaken these obligations and it should respect them. Elections need to be fair. The opposition needs to be respected and not persecuted. Members of the opposition have disappeared and these cases need to be investigated.

We know from history that dictatorships do not last forever. Freedom prevails in the end. And so it will in Belarus. The challenge for the government is to decide whether it wants to help and get on the right side of history or whether it wants to stay on the wrong side of history. We cannot make this decision. We can only point it out.

• • •

*— Elizabeth Jones, US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia, during a video conference with participants from Minsk on February 15 this year ex-*

*pressed her assurance that during the meeting between George Bush and Vladimir Putin the issue of "free elections in Belarus, political freedom, opportunities for Belarusians to make economic and political choices "would be discussed "in relative detail." Have such discussions been held at the top level? What position does the Kremlin have on these issues? Have any agreements been reached?*

We are not going to talk about the fate of Belarus without talking with the Belarusian people as well. We do not make secret agreements about the fate of other countries. What we say about Belarus we say openly and we say honestly. We believe that the Belarusian people have a right to live in freedom. We believe that democracy will make the Belarusian people masters in their own home. **And we hope that Russia will work to support freedom in Belarus because Russia I believe is a great friend of Belarus as it shows to be.**

President Bush and President Putin have good personal relations. We believe that cooperation with Russia can help democracy in Belarus and **we hope the Russians will work to support the Belarusian people. We have good relations with Russia but we will support democracy in any way.**

**(Editor's note:** The highlighted sentences in the above answer leave us with an uneasy feeling. Does the US Government continue to expect Russia to bring freedom and democracy to Belarus? Or, will the United States support democracy in Belarus in any way? Based on Belarusian historical experience, the two statements appear to be mutually exclusive.)

## HISTORICAL DATES

### August 9, 1910

Birthdate of the Belarusian poetess **Larysa Hienijus**, in the town of Zelva.

### August 14, 1385

The dynastic Union of **Kreva** was signed between the Grand Duchy of Litva and the Kingdom of Poland - its purpose being a common defense against the aggression of the German Teutonic Order. Under the terms of this treaty Grand Duke Jahajla married the Polish Queen Jadwiga, and became the King of Poland. The dynastic union thus created a federation of two nations.

### September 8, 1514

Anniversary of the **Battle of Vorsha**, when a military force of about 30,000 men, led by hetman Konstantin Astroski of the Grand Duchy of Litva defeated a Muscovite army of cca. 80,000 men near the town of Vorša.

Since 1991 this date has been celebrated as the **Day of Belarusian Military Glory**.

## BELARUS' FORUM

### 4th World Congress Of Belarusians

*organized by the World Union of Belarusians "Backauscyna," took place in Miensk, Belarus on July 16-17, 2005. It was held in the International Education Center IBB.*

Altogether 278 delegates participated in the proceedings of the Congress: 144 from Belarus and 134 from abroad, which included 44 delegates from the Russian Federation alone. Belarusian diaspora was represented by delegates from 69 organizations from 21 countries. The diplomatic corps was represented by the US ambassador George Krol (who welcomed the Congress in Belarusian), members of the Lithuanian, Polish and French embassies. Mr. Eberhard Heiken, the former former OSCE chairman for Belarus, also attended the Congress.

The Congress attracted the attention of 16 publications, both independent and state-supported, as well as seven information agencies: BelaPAN, Interfax, BBC, Reuters, Associated Press and others. Radio Liberty, two Polish radio stations, and six TV channels also covered the proceedings.

The state authorities were represented by officials from the Ministry of Justice and the Committee on Religion and Nationalities. However, in the state-controlled Belarusian media the Congress was virtually ignored.

The first day of the proceedings featured several topical lectures:

"Belarus for Diaspora — Diaspora for Belarus, the ways for consolidation and development of the nation," by Prof. Anatol Hryckiewicz, chairman of "Backauscyna,"

"Consolidation and development of the nation — the view from America," by Dr. Jan Zaprudnik, member of the Great Council of "Backauscyna,"

"Belarusian Diaspora — its current problems and perspectives," by Aleh Hardzijenka, a historian.

"The role of the diaspora in building a civic society in Belarus" by Alaksiej Karol, a historian and director of "Backauscyna,"

"Encyclopedia of the Belarusian diaspora - one of the main tasks for Belarusians abroad," by Dr. Vitaut Kipel, chairman of the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences (New York), and member of the Great Council of "Backauscyna,"

"Economic realities and development trends of Belarus' economy," by Leonid Zlotnikau, an economist.

The second day of the Congress featured several round table discussions:

"Belarus for Diaspora — Diaspora for Belarus, the ways for consolidation and development of the nation,"

"Culture and Education of Belarusians Abroad," and

"Belarus and diaspora - perspectives of cooperation."

Eventually, the Congress elected the new leadership of "Backauscyna." Dr. Anatol Hryckiewicz asked to be relieved

from the chairmanship of the organization due to health problems, and proposed the well-known artist Ales Marackin to succeed him.

Mr. Marackin was elected almost unanimously, while Ms. Alena Makouskaja was confirmed in her position as the director of the Council of "Backauscyna."

A number of documents has been adopted summarizing the results of the congress. Among them is the resolution addressing the government with the suggestion not to divide the Belarusian diaspora for political reasons, and not to create artificial alternatives to "Backauscyna" which aims to unite the Belarusians of the world.

## Day of Belarusian Military Glory

The traditional festival of the Belarusian authors' songs, and observance of the Day of Belarusian Military Glory, was held on Sept. 3 and 4 on the Krapina Field near Vorsha, the site of the Battle of Vorsha that took place on Sept. 8, 1514. (Refer to Historical Data on p. 6)

The festivities were attended by about 200 guests who arrived from every corner of Belarus. They began with a mass, celebrated by Orthodox and Greek-Catholic priests in memory of those who fell in defense of their homeland.

Belarusian songs, poetry and music sounded all night until dawn on Sunday. The popular poet Andrej Chadanovic was awarded the traditional Vorsha crown, blessed by both members of clergy.

Source: Web Site of the BNFParty, [www.pbnf.org](http://www.pbnf.org)

## HISTORICAL DATES

### November 2 - Remembrance Day (Dziady)

The day for commemorating ancestors with a special family meal, dating from pre-Christian times and later associated with Christianity's All Souls' Day.

Since the Belarusian Declaration of Sovereignty in July, 1990, **Dziady** became an occasion for patriotic demonstrations emphasizing the victims and heroes of the historical past. Such observances were led by the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) and other groups and included marches to **Kurapaty**, a site near Minsk where mass executions took place during the Stalinist era.

### November 1830 through 1831

The national liberation uprising against the Russian empire and for the renewal of the *Recpaspalitaja* (Republic) of Two Nations (Poland and Litva)

### November 1st through December 31, 1920

#### The Anti-Bolshevik Sluck Uprising

Anti-Bolshevik military action in the region of Sluck, organized by representatives of the Belarusian Democratic [National] Republic

## Culture & Society

### Film About Partisans Goes Against Official Grain

By Jan Maksymiuk

The 40th international film festival in Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic, in early July showed a rare bird in the world of cinema: a Belarusian feature film. The film, which bears the double title "Occupation -- Mystery Plays," failed to win a prize at the festival, but its 33-year-old director, Andrey Kudzinenka, did not appear to have been particularly upset.

The film had already been shown at festivals in Russia, the Netherlands, Israel, Germany, Estonia, Ukraine, and quite recently in Poland, where it won an award. Kudzinenka told RFE/RL that he did not expect any recognition in Karlovy Vary two years after his film was released.

Kudzinenka's 90-minute film is actually a collection of three separate novellas -- the "mystery plays" of the title -- named in their successive order as "Adam and Eve," "Mother," and "Father." The novellas depict western Belarus under the Nazi occupation in 1942 but -- like medieval "mystery plays" that were based on Biblical stories -- they are not without deeper, "Biblical" undertones.

Kudzinenka shot the film with a digital camera and subsequently copied it to celluloid. He says he is unable to estimate the total budget of the film, which was supported by a grant from the Netherlands, but its production costs were surely below \$50,000.

"Adam and Eve" shows a Belarusian youth named Adam being recruited for the anti-Nazi guerillas by a Russian partisan. The Russian simultaneously gives Adam his first combat assignment -- to execute a fellow villager who defected from the guerillas to live a peaceful, even if physically exhausting life with his mistress Eve, a nymphomaniac Pole. Unable to resist Eve's lascivious charms, Adam obtains his first sexual experience and kills the Russian, while the fellow villager hangs himself in fear of the partisans' revenge. Adam stays with Eve, forgetting the partisans' cause.

This frivolous story alone could be anathema to Belarusian censors, as the guerilla war against the Nazi invaders in World War II has become an officially consecrated myth in Belarus. According to official sources, some 350,000 people took to Belarus's forests to fight the Nazis.

In official Belarusian postwar historiography, the Soviet guerillas were portrayed as an ideologically driven nationwide resistance movement against the Nazi occupation and for the return of the much-coveted Soviet Union. No erotic frolics, even in the context of the most unambiguous sacrifice for the liberation cause, were allowed in films about partisans made by the state filmmaker Belarusfilm, which was dubbed "Partisanfilm" in the Soviet era for its huge output of war pictures.

Kudzinienka's second novella appears to be even more controversial than the first. A child living with a mute mother is run over by two Germans on a motorcycle and dies. Partisans kill one German and wound the other but fail to find him. The Belarusian mother treats the wounded Nazi, feeding him with milk from her own breast. After the Nazi is back on his feet, he leaves for his unit while the mother goes apparently insane out of grief and burns herself in her house.

Initially, Kudzinienka's film obtained an official go-ahead for distribution in Belarus. But the authorities changed their decision after the movie was qualified to be shown at an international film festival in Moscow last year. It was the first time that a Belarusian movie was presented at that forum. Kudzinienka believes that the authorities were envious that his film was made by an independent filmmaker, not by Belarusfilm. Moreover, Kudzinienka says the authorities were worried that his film would seriously undermine the official Belarusian mythology about the Soviet partisans.

However, he is in two minds about the ban on his film in Belarus. "[The authorities] revoked the [distribution] license -- on one hand, they did a very bad thing, because we made the film primarily for Belarusians, who are the only people capable of spotting all the subtleties in it," Kudzinienka said. "But on the other, they [simultaneously] made publicity for the film."

In the third novella, a small boy longs for his father who left their village before the war, when it was in Poland, for the Soviet Union and never returned. The boy's mother lives with a Belarusian policeman, that is, with a Nazi collaborator. A partisan turns up claiming to be the boy's father and exploits the boy's affection for him to facilitate his comrades' way into the boy's house in order to kill the collaborator.

Another partisan, with ostensibly Asiatic features, slits the throats of the policeman and the boy's mother, only to be subsequently knifed to death by his comrade-in-arms, a Belarusian who boasts that his great-grandfather participated in an anti-Russian uprising in the 19th century. "My great-grandfather did not fight [the Russians] so that some Turks could slit the throats of our women," the Belarusian says after the slaughter ends.

Kudzinienka says he was given a peculiarly worded official explanation of the ban on his film in Belarus. "They wrote verbatim the following: 'The film does not correspond to the real truth, it can insult the sensitivities of war veterans and make a bad influence on the education of the rising generation.' It is a sort of Soviet formulation, but the most interesting thing in it is the expression 'real truth,'" he said.

It is difficult to figure out what "real-truth" elements are missing from Kudzinienka's film from an official viewpoint, but one aspect of the film seems to be in stark contrast to all partisan movies produced by Belarusfilm. There is no ideology in Kudzinienka's three stories. His heroes choose to join or abandon the warring sides, be it Soviets or Germans, not for ideological reasons but to pursue purely private goals and impulses. In this they seem to be closer to

real life, even if simultaneously further away from the "real truth" of the official myth.

The Belarusian weekly *Nasha Niva* hailed the release of "Occupation -- Mystery Plays" as the birth of independent, de-Sovietized Belarusian cinema. The film, a rarity in Belarus because of its independent production and demythologizing bite, is even rarer because of its original use of the Belarusian language. Prior to Kudzinienka's movie, virtually all feature films in Belarus were made in Russian and only sporadically dubbed into Belarusian.

**Source:** RFE/RL Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova Report, July 15, 2005

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## Tadeusz Kosciuszko Monument Unveiled in Minsk

*Following are U.S. Ambassador Krol's remarks at the ceremony to unveil the Tadeusz Kosciuszko monument on July 6, 2005.*

Dear Guests, friends, and colleagues! Thank you all for gathering here today as we dedicate a monument to a great hero of our Revolutionary War who was born and raised in what is today Belarus.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko was born in 1746 into a family of petty nobility in a modest home located in the area of Kosovo now in the Brest oblast of western Belarus. Earlier this year on the anniversary of his birth I participated in the dedication ceremony of his newly rebuilt birthplace -- a project to which this embassy gave considerable financial support to complete. I am pleased we have with us today Dr Leonid Nesterchuk, who was the guiding force behind this project. Dr Nesterchuk knows more about the life and times of Tadeusz Kosciuszko than practically any person now alive. I will therefore be cautious about what I say about Kosciuszko in front of such an eminent authority!

But first, I wish to pay tribute to the monument's sculptor, the well-known Belarusian artist Ales Shaternik. Many of his works grace Minsk and other cities in Belarus. Mr. Shaternik unfortunately cannot be with us today. He is in America in fact, visiting his daughter in New Jersey. But I know he is with us today in spirit.

I want to express special thanks our great GSO team for their dedication and skill in providing General Kosciuszko his "headquarters" -- the stand from which he now will command our attention and admiration. I also wish to thank our gardener for his skill and artistry in beautifying the General's "quarters."

Friends, Tadeusz Kosciuszko loved his homeland, which at the time of his birth was known as the Commonwealth or *rzeczpospolita* -- the union of the kingdom of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was the historic name for the territory comprising today's Lithuania and Belarus. Some think that Kosciuszko, of Lithuanian-Belarusian roots, may have spoken Belarusian as his first tongue. Like many from that region, he came from a Catholic-Orthodox family and was christened in both churches and bore the names Andrei and Tadeusz respectively. As a



young man he went to Warsaw where he attended the famous Cadet School. He then went on to France for further studies as a military engineer. There he came under the influence of the Enlightenment.

Graduating in 1774 Kosciuszko returned home and promptly fell in love with a local girl (who can blame him here in Belarus!). But, when that romance was thwarted by the girl's angry father and hearing the "shot heard round the world" – the start of the American revolt – he decided to travel to the American colonies to fight for freedom and perhaps, like many other disappointed lovers, "to forget."

Kosciuszko's engineering skills were put to good use by General George Washington. He became famous for designing fortifications and bridges and placing artillery. In America, Kosciuszko is known as the Father of West Point, the strategic fort he designed on the Hudson River north of New York City that later became the home of the U.S. Military Academy. He is also known as the Father of the US Artillery for his brilliance in that area of warfare. The strategic gun placements he engineered at the Battle of Saratoga brought about the defeat of the British – the decisive victory that brought France into the war. He later served with distinction in the southern campaign that drove the British north to their ultimate defeat at Yorktown. In gratitude the American Congress made him a Brigadier General and granted him land in Ohio and money – \$15,000 – a considerable sum at that time, although it took him years to collect it. Any American citizen can certainly sympathize with Kosciuszko on that score!

Kosciuszko returned to his home in 1784 where he became progressively involved in managing his own estate, reforming his homeland and fighting off its political disintegration. His disgust with the slavery he saw in America was a constant complaint in his voluminous correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. Kosciuszko himself freed his own serfs and urged this policy on his neighbors.

The dismemberment of the Commonwealth by Austria, Russia and Prussia caused Kosciuszko to take up arms, first in defense of the King of Poland and later in a popular insurrection he led in 1794 that, after several astounding victories against much superior forces, finally ended in his defeat, capture and imprisonment in Russia.

Kosciuszko's military prowess and love of liberty made him wildly popular in revolutionary Europe. France made him a citizen. In conservative England, ironically the country he fought against in America, he was renowned as a supporter of constitutional monarchy. Even his Russian captors admired his devotion to his cause. Shortly after becoming Tsar, Paul I freed him, bestowed on him a large sum of money but forbade him ever to return to his homeland.

In exile, Kosciuszko traveled to Europe where he was feted as a hero and to the United States where he visited old comrades George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and stayed in the then capital of Philadelphia where hundreds of admirers visited him. The house where he stayed

in Philadelphia is now the National Kosciuszko Museum.

When Napoleon decided to move eastward, he asked Kosciuszko to lead an uprising in the former commonwealth lands. This Kosciuszko declined when Napoleon would not promise freedom and sovereignty to a reconstituted Commonwealth. Following Napoleon's defeat, Kosciuszko was even courted by the victorious Russian Tsar Aleksandr, who exhibited liberal leanings. But the Tsar never responded to Kosciuszko's appeal to free all serfs and restore the independent Commonwealth.

Kosciuszko spent his final years in Switzerland where he continued to maintain a lively correspondence with his long time American friends George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

Kosciuszko died in Switzerland in 1817, never having returned to his homeland since his defeat in 1794. But there is a romantic element to his passing – shortly before he died, his long ago love, that Belarusian beauty he hoped to run away with, now the Princess Lubomirskaya, visited him. Their love for each other had never died.

Kosciuszko's body was interred in the chapel of Krakow's historic Wawel castle after the Tsar refused permission for his remains to be buried in Vilnius. In Washington DC his statue stands across from our White House along with those of Lafayette, Von Steuben and Rochambeau. Scores of towns, counties, schools, streets and bridges in the United States are named after him.

Kosciuszko is therefore a national hero of Poland, Lithuania, and the United States, a citizen of France and a resident of Switzerland. But he was always the son of this land, now called Belarus. He gave his all for the freedom and independence not only for his own people but for all peoples – the motto he gave to the 1794 insurrection was "For our Freedom and yours!" Thomas Jefferson described Kosciuszko as the "purest son of Liberty" he had ever encountered.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko is truly a man for all ages for all countries. I am honored to bestow this monument to the American Embassy in Minsk so that all members of our embassy family now and in the future and all visitors to this embassy can think of this great man and his enormous contribution and sacrifice to our countries' history and freedom.

It is only appropriate that we honor him in the land of his birth, the land of his forefathers, the land where he struggled for freedom and the land that deserves to honor and cherish the values of liberty and responsibility he so admired and served so selflessly throughout his life.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to dedicate this monument today with all of you as witnesses.

Major John Pilloni, U.S. Army, in recognition of your own unparalleled service to the army and nation General Kosciuszko served so valiantly, may I ask you to do the honor of unveiling the monument.

Source: <http://minsk.usembassy.gov>.

## KGB Censors Internet Cartoons

The international organization Reporters Without Borders today condemned the raids carried out on August 16, 2005 by the Belarusian secret police, the KGB, on three apartments in Miensk and Horadnia (Hrodna) allegedly occupied by young members of the Third Way (Treci Slach) civic initiative.

The KGB confiscated 12 computers, dozens of hard disks and other information carriers. Paval Marozau, one of those allegedly producing satirical Internet cartoons, said he and two of his colleagues were questioned for five hours and accused of besmirching Lukashenka's honor.



The Third Way initiative, established by students of several Belarusian universities, has been active for over a year. It runs its own Web site <http://3dway.org>. A popular feature of this site are the animated satirical cartoons (in Flash format). They may be seen at <http://mult.3dway.org>. Some of

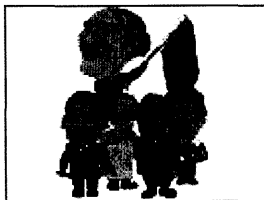
the cartoons dealt with president Lukashenka's well-known fondness for sports, the electoral fraud and Belarus' international isolation.

According to Marozau, the authorities made a big mistake by trying to persecute the cartoonists. "The most important thing in Internet is the professional level of the production. If it appeals to the viewers, it may spread rapidly. The most absurd aspect of this case is the attempt to accuse us of insulting the president. If people are made to laugh by quotations (from his speeches), who could complain? And who is to blame?" said Marozau.

The incident with the creators of Belarusian animated films could bring about a solidarity action; Internet users may soon see similar films produced in other countries. And Belarusian authorities will not be able to control this process.

On August 22, the Prosecutor's Office in Minsk brought up a criminal action against the Third Way members - for slandering the president. All their documents were confiscated, including passports. Mr. Marozau was ordered not to leave the city of Minsk.

**Source:** Charter '97 Press Center, August 23, 2005



## Evangelical Reformed Church Liquidated

On August 22, 2005, the Minsk City court has ruled to liquidate the Christian religious congregation Belarusian Evangelical Reformed Union, having accused it of not having re-registered in 2005.

The Minsk city court judge Ala Salaujova has been examining the case for one hour. According to documents available to her, the congregation has been last registered by the Ministry of Justice in 1992.

However, according to the new legislation, all civil and public associations should have a legal address in commercial or industrial premises. Since the Reformed (Calvinist) congregation has not submitted documents, specifying a new legal address within two years after the new legislation went into effect, it is now subject to liquidation.

Many priests and ministers of the recently liquidated religious communities maintain that the lack of money prevents them from renting suitable premises. At the same time the state does not allocate any funds for this purpose.

In court the Calvinist minister Lavon Lipien stated that he has to boycott the new discriminatory law. Members of his congregation demand that the state first return the Calvinist churches that had belonged to that denomination historically (See the Editor's Note below). "All our historical buildings have been confiscated, and now they demand a legal address. We ask that at least one of these buildings be returned and that persecution of our church be stopped," said Pastor Lipien in an interview with Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. "Liquidation of our congregation is a purely political issue, ordered by the authorities," he continued.

Pastor Lipien is certain that an appropriate international reaction from Calvinist churches will follow soon. According to the US state department, Belarus is on the "Watch List" of countries not fully respecting the right for freedom of worship, along with Cuba, Egypt and Nigeria.

**Editor's Note:** The history of the Calvinist church in Belarusian lands dates to the 16th century, when it gained numerous followers among the higher nobility (the magnates) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Its most significant supporters were the hetmans (military leaders) Mikalaj and Janush Radzivil. Janush Radzivil built in 1617 the first Calvinist church in Novy Horad in the Sluck region of Belarus.

In the 17th century, the Calvinists established a number of schools and churches in western and central regions of Belarus. The school in Vilnia, established in 1625, is considered Belarus' oldest educational institution. It produced a number of prominent intellectuals: Illa Kapijevic — the inventor of the currently used Cyrillic alphabet, philosophers, scientists, as well as Vasil Ciapinski and Symon Budny, influential Protestant reformers and humanists.

The Calvinist church traces its beginnings to the first half of the 16th century. It is based on the philosophy of Jean Calvin, initially French and later Swiss Protestant re-

former and humanist. Also known as the Reformed Church (in Western Europe) and the Presbyterian Church (in Great Britain and the United States) it has today a membership of cca 60 million worldwide.

### The Radzivil Palace in Niasviz on the UNESCO World Heritage List

At the 29th session of the Intergovernmental Committee on World Cultural and Nature Heritage Protection, a decision was made to include on the UNESCO World Heritage List the architectural and cultural complex of the Radzivil family residence in Niasviz, Belarus.

**Source:** Free Belarus Newsletter, July 14-26, 2005.

## Tom Stoppard In Minsk

*"My impressions from the visit to Belarus differ from impressions which I had in the Soviet Union and the Czech Republic: the fear is hidden inside," said the acclaimed British playwright after his visit to Belarus. Tom Stoppard visited Minsk from August 28 to September 2 on personal invitation of the director of the project Free Theatre, Natalya Kolyada and playwright Nikolay Khalezin. The great British dramatist, together with the former president of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel and American playwright Arthur Kopit, is one of the trustees of the project Free Theatre. On one of the days of his visit Tom Stoppard met representatives of the civil initiative Charter '97, the youth resistance movement "Zubr", students of the Belarusian Humanities Lyceum, intellectuals.*

During these meetings one could feel how sensitive the playwright is to the problem of human rights violations. A member of Amnesty International who had visited the Soviet Union and the Czech Republic in the times of Communist dictatorship, he felt like returning to the past in a time machine. He saw beating of peaceful demonstrations, arrests and a complete absence of freedom of speech in Belarus.

The meeting with the leader of the civil initiative "We Remember" Iryna Krasouskaya was a real shock to Tom Stoppard, after he learned the details of the abduction of the well-known public and political leaders of Belarus.

Tom Stoppard's going to the action held by the students of Yakub Kolas Belarusian Humanitarian Lyceum was a complete surprise to them. On September 1 the students organized a protest by the building of the Lyceum, now seized by the authorities. Tom Stoppard greeted the students and told that it was an honour for him to support them in this hard moment.

Tom Stoppard also talked to the famous Belarusian filmmaker Yury Khaschavatski and an artist Uladzimir Tsleser. The viewing of the film "An Ordinary President" ended by a two-hour talk about the history of the film and the preceding events.

Sharing his impressions of his visit to Minsk, Tom Stoppard said: "My impressions after the visit to Belarus

differ from the impressions of the Soviet Union and the Czech Republic: the fear is hidden inside, and walking down the streets of Minsk, sometimes it's impossible to understand that you are in a country with a deeply-rooted totalitarian system". During his one-week visit to Belarus he mapped out his days to the last five-minute increment. He was busy for about 12 hours daily. During his stay Tom Stoppard held a two-day master-class for Belarusian playwrights and stage directors, met art and culture personalities, representatives of civil society, visited several historical places in Minsk, and old towns of Belarus: Mir and Niasvizh.

The master-class by the great British dramatist was preceded by a performance of the "Free Theatre" on Sarah Kane's play "Psycho 4.48", staged by Uladzimir Scherban. The work of the stage director and the actresses Yana Rusakevich and Olga Shantsyna was highly appreciated by maestro, as well as the quality of Belarusian playwrights taking part in the seminar. Speaking about his impressions of the two-day communication with the young theatre workers, he said that "Belarusian playwrights are people of absolutely European theatre context. If it was not for the simultaneous translation, I could have forgotten that I see Belarusians and not young British authors".

The visit by Tom Stoppard ended on September 2, but he expressed a wish to come to Minsk again, to the first night performances of stage directors and actors.

**Source:** Charter '97 Press Center, September 9, 2005

## Track-and-Field Athletes Win Medals

In the World Track-and-Field championships, held in Helsinki, Finland in August 2005, the Belarusian team placed fifth in the world, behind the United States, Russia, Ethiopia and Cuba, and ahead of France and Sweden.

Belarusian competitors won the following medals:

Gold: Ivan Cichan in Men's hammer throw - 83.89 m.

Nadzieja Astapcuk in Women's shotput - 20.51 m.

Silver: Vadzim Dzиеviatouski, Men's hammer throw - 82.60 m.

Ryta Turava in Women's 20 km walk - in 1: 27: 05

Bronze: Women's 4x100m relay race - in 42.56 seconds (Juliya Niesciarenka, Natalla Salahub, Alena Nieumiarzyckaja, Aksana Drahun)

In University Games, held in Izmir, Turkey in August, Belarusian athletes were also successful:

1st place in Men's hammer throw - V. Dzиеviatouski, 79.13 m.

1st place in men's decathlon - A. Parchomienka, 8051 points.

**Note:** All athletes' names are transcribed in the Belarusian Latin alphabet.

## Thoughts and Observations

### Faux Pas in Brussels, Fehltritt in Berlin Regarding Belarus

By Vladimir Socor

Representatives of civil society in Belarus and the Executive Council of the Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic are appealing to the European Commission (EC, executive arm of the European Union) and the German government-connected international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle Radio, to correct their recent decision to start broadcasting to Belarus in the Russian language, instead of using the native language of the country.

The political *faux pas* (*Fehltritt* in German) originated in a decision by the Brussels-based European Commission and was accentuated by a polemical response from Deutsche Welle (DW) to appeals from Belarus.

The EC recently held a tender to broadcasters for a contract to launch a daily, 30-minute news-and-analysis radio program to Belarus, to be aired in the Russian language. The project forms part of the European Union's stated intention to create alternative and accessible information sources for Belarus (an intention that in turn forms part of the EU's draft action plan to promote democracy in Belarus). However, the EC provides a meager 138,000 euros annually for the radio project. DW plans to launch the program in September through its Russian-language service.

That choice of language has been met with consternation and criticism from Belarusian democratic opposition and intelligentsia representatives. An appeal from those circles, penned by Popular Front leader Vintsuk Vyachorka and prominent analyst Vital Silitski, notes that the decision reflects a "complete misunderstanding" of the potential for revival of the democratic nation in Belarus. Referring to the experience of post-Soviet transformation, the appeal notes, "The recovery of national identity is a key factor in the democratization of any nation." President Alexander Lukashenka's regime understands this fact and is therefore discriminating against the Belarusian language in favor of Russian, telling the country and Europe "that the Belarusian language has no prospects and that there is no demand for it among Belarusian citizens."

Thus, the authorities "infringe every day on the right of Belarusians to listen to news in their own language," the appeal notes. It therefore expresses dismay at the EU's choice of language for its broadcasts, which in effect "lines up behind the authorities' policy," unwittingly "following the official propaganda line" that people are not interested in the Belarusian language. To rebut that assumption, the document cites 1999 census data showing that more than three-fourths of the population regard Belarusian as their native language (BelaPAN, August 5).

Another appeal to the EU, which is due for international release today after circulating within Belarusian democratic circles, notes that Brussel's decision singles out Belarus from among the other post-Soviet countries in Europe by choosing to address Belarusian society in a way that "perpetuates the Soviet legacy of Russification" — a decision it deems "unjustified and unacceptable." It also deems it discriminatory, inasmuch as Belarusian retains the status of an official language in Belarus and is not less commonly understood than the Russian language. The document notes that promoting European values in Belarus "necessitates encouraging in the public consciousness those aspects of the national legacy that unite Belarus with Europe, in contrast to the legacy of Soviet Russification and to the current regime's [policy of] imposing re-Russification."

The document urges the EU to encourage Belarusians' feelings of kinship with Europe "based on the elements of national consciousness that they historically developed while [existing] within a European context. By contrast, a legacy shared with the Soviet Union or the Russian empire cannot foster a sense of kinship with Europe, for which reason the present regime cultivates all aspects of that Soviet/Russian legacy in Belarus." Citing the record of Belarus' neighbors (Poland, the Baltic states, Ukraine) the appeal underscores the connection between overcoming Soviet-era cultural legacies and reasserting a European identity based on national cultures. Because the EC's decision on broadcasting overlooked this crucial link, the broadcasting project in its present form "critically compromises its essential purposes." The document calls on the EC "most urgently" [i.e., ahead of the planned launch of the broadcasts in September] to review its decision ([www.radabnr.org](http://www.radabnr.org)).

The EC is not known to have responded publicly. For their part, Deutsche Welle representatives defensively cite the terms of the EC's tender and contract, which only authorize funding for DW's Russian Service to launch Russian-language broadcasting to Belarus. That Service's chief, however, went further in an interview with an independent Belarusian news agency, where she rationalized the decision on three grounds. First, DW has already been broadcasting a Russian-language program to Central Asia for four years. Second, broadcasting to Belarus in Russian is at least "doing something," and thus better than the alternative option of "doing nothing." And, third, "it is stupid to say that Russian is bad and Belarusian is good," the chief is cited as arguing (BelaPAN, August 8).

The first assertion implies that an undesirable precedent should be taken as point of reference. The second argument suggests that an inappropriate project is defensible simply for "doing something" merely because it "does something" — a more appropriate justification for an EU-funded make-work project than for a worthy democracy-promoting effort. The third assertion would seem to obviate the need for seriously addressing the Belarusian democrats' concerns.

Source: Eurasia Daily Monitor, August 12, 2005.

*The topic is continued on the next page*

Additional light on the situation was shed by RFE/RL's analyst Jan Maksymiuk in his article of August 24, 2005: **"German Broadcaster Makes Waves with Russian-language plans"**, excerpts of which follow:

Belarusian opposition leaders seeking the role of a joint democratic candidate to face President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in the 2006 presidential ballot were cautious after news emerged of Deutsche Welle's plans. United Civic Party leader Anatol Lyabedzka said Deutsche Welle's broadcasts in Belarusian would be a more appropriate option but immediately added, "If we cannot influence the development of events, Russian-language broadcasts are better than nothing at all." However, most opposition leaders with any chance of securing the democratic parties' presidential nomination have chosen not to comment on the issue in any way.

As for anti-Lukashenka intellectual circles in Belarus, Deutsche Welle's project has sparked a heated debate over the fate of the Belarusian language in particular, and the country's political and civilizational choices in general.

Aleh Trusau — chairman of the Belarusian Language Society, a nongovernmental group working to support the mother tongue of most Belarusians — was the first to urge Deutsche Welle to launch its Belarus broadcasts in Belarusian. "[Deutsche Welle broadcasts in Russian] would plunge Belarusian listeners deeper into the Russian information space and increase their isolation from Europe," Trusau argued in an open letter to Deutsche Welle in June. And in an interview with RFE/RL's Belarusian Service later in the month, he clarified his position further by saying, "There are a lot of Russian-language sections in international broadcasters — Voice of America, BBC, Deutsche Welle — that employ emigrants from Russia with an imperial point of view. For them, Ukraine and Belarus are not full-fledged nations."

German diplomat Hans-Georg Wiecek, former head of the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group in Minsk and a staunch advocate of EU-sponsored broadcasting to Belarus, responded to this wave of protests in Belarus through RFE/RL's Belarusian Service earlier this month. Wiecek said that neither Brussels nor Deutsche Welle is against Belarusian-language broadcasting. According to Wiecek, there is currently no money to organize Belarusian-language broadcasts. "This is a problem of means. Now in Russian, later in Belarusian," Wiecek said. "The [Deutsche Welle] new project is only the beginning." Wiecek stressed that reaction to the Deutsche Welle project in Belarus is quite understandable.

It was initially reported that Deutsche Welle would broadcast 15 minutes a day to Belarus, but Deutsche Welle's Russian Service Director Cornelia Rabitz later signaled that her team might in September come up with a 30-minute daily program in which 15 minutes would be devoted to European developments and another 15 minutes to Belarusian domestic news. Deutsche Welle's Russian Service Director Rabitz told Belarusian journalists that her company should be praised rather than criticized for its Belarus

broadcasting project. "It is stupid to say that Russian is bad and Belarusian is good," BelaPAN quoted her as saying on 8 August.

Rabitz's irritation is perhaps to be expected. However, as far as opponents of Russian-language broadcasting from abroad to Belarus are concerned, both of those arguments miss the point.

First, nobody in Belarus appears to be imposing such a "bad-good" evaluation on the two languages. The protests are directed primarily against what is perceived as Deutsche Welle's emblematic support for the policies and ideology of Russification promoted by Lukashenka in Belarus. Some might ask, not without reason, why Deutsche Welle found funding five years ago to sponsor Ukrainian-language broadcasting to Ukraine — the country Russified to a level comparable to that of Belarus — and was unable to repeat the act with regard to Belarus.

On the other hand, while many Belarusians (including many with university diplomas) find it difficult to speak or write freely in Belarusian, **the overwhelming majority has no problems whatsoever in understanding the language. Therefore, a Belarusian-language broadcaster could reach the same audiences in Belarus as a Russian-language one.** This was amply demonstrated by the highly successful, private, Belarusian-language Radio 101.2 in Minsk, which was closed down by the Lukashenka administration in mid-1990s because, as one commentator put it, it broadcast in the language of freedom, not that of suppression.

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## Interview with Vladimir Ruml, Czech Charge d'affaires in Belarus

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*Vladimir Ruml started his political career in 1989 as a member of the oppositional "Democratic Initiative" and after the collapse of the communist regime he represented the Civil Forum in the first free election. In the early 90s he managed the office of the Vice Minister of the Interior and then he was promoted to the position of the Head of the Security Department of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 1998 Mr. Ruml worked as the counsellor of the Czech Republic's permanent mission to NATO, and on January 7, 2004, he became the head of the Czech Embassy in Belarus.*

### How did you manage to define the so-called "Belarusian character" for yourself?

From my point of view, there is no big difference between the mentality of the Czech and the Belarusian peoples. The Belarusians are peace loving and amiable, but a bit passive. We do not want to act as subjects of the state power. If it exists at our expense, we should control it. We discuss freely and openly in the Mass Media and the Parliament positive and negative aspects of our government and state institutions.

### How important was it for the victory of democracy in your country to overcome your citizens' inner fear?

Extremely important. Courageous people from "Charter-77",

"Democratic Initiative", "Helsinki Committee", a range of artists, actors and musicians helped common citizens with their own examples - visiting plants, towns and villages - to overcome this fear.

**"Orange Revolution", "Rose Revolution", victory of democracy in Yugoslavia and Kirghizia... What do you think - can we consider the democratic revolutions to be a continuation of the "velvet" revolution or maybe these are new geopolitical processes?**

I think that the Czech Velvet Revolution did not start and, unfortunately, did not finish the process of the post-war liberation of the peoples. In my view, this is not a new geopolitical process, but a natural aspiration of those who long for more freedom, justice and prosperity. Europe has already encountered authoritarian chiefs, and there is neither place, nor mood for new ones.

**Source:** Charter'97 Press Center, August 24, 2005

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## Making Lukashenka Think Twice

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By Vitali Silitski

*Has Poland's policy toward Belarus failed? No. The real failure is the European Union's policy.*

In the eyes of Polish critics, the bruising diplomatic clash between Belarus and Poland over the past month has underscored the failure of the Poland's policy towards Belarus. In fact, the real reason might well have been that this policy was better, and better-reasoned than others.

Of one thing there is no doubt: the conflict between Minsk and Warsaw that broke out after President Alyaksandr Lukashenka overturned the results of a leadership election in the Belarusian Union of Poles (ZPB) ended in yet another small, victorious war for Lukashenka. Not only did it once again demonstrate the regime's unlimited power within Belarus, but it also confirmed that the outside world is effectively impotent in its dealings with Lukashenka. During the diplomatic brawl, the Belarusian government tamed a potentially disloyal organization, gave a drubbing to a big neighbor, enhanced its propaganda machine's image of Belarus as a fortress encircled by the enemies, and gained very favorable assessments in Russia, the only neighbor that currently matters much to it. It suffered no consequences bar one: a drastic curtailment of diplomatic ties with Poland and a deepening of the country's international isolation – but this is a consequence that the authorities in Minsk will gladly welcome.

But in Poland it was not just Minsk's behavior that caused uproar, but also the inability of the Polish government to do much in this situation. Critics of Poland's left-wing government attribute the predicament directly to the failure of the government (and particularly of former Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz) to have any plan of action ready for a situation such as this, and, in a broader sense,

to an overemphasis on the need of constructive engagement with Belarus in the past. This criticism is not altogether unwarranted, but to understand why Lukashenka won and once again emerged unscathed from a diplomatic battle, this episode should be seen in the broader picture of Poland's – and Europe's – policy towards Belarus in the past. But first, what the conflict was all about needs clarification.

### WHAT THE CONFLICT WASN'T

What the attack on the Union of Poles was not was an 'ethnic conflict.' Nor was it even an attempt to stir up suspicion against ethnic Poles. To start with, the nearly 400,000-strong Polish ethnic minority is by and large almost indistinguishable from the rest of Belarusian society. Most of the Poles live in rural areas and are fairly intermixed with all other ethnic groups; not all of them are even fluent in Polish. The Poles are Catholic – but so too are over a million Belarusians; and most other Belarusians are just happy that the Poles provide them with an opportunity to celebrate two Christmases and two Easters. Affiliation with the Catholic Church is their mark of national identity, but, beyond religion, those Poles who take national identity seriously do not really face discrimination: in fact, in many areas there are more opportunities to get schooling in Polish than in Belarusian, a language deliberately relegated by Lukashenka in favor of Russian. And, like the rest of society, most ethnic Poles are deeply apolitical; many barely even noticed this conflict. (The ZPB itself still has around 20,000 members, barely one in 20 Poles in Belarus.) Indeed, a fair number of Poles are Lukashenka supporters: in some areas near Minsk with large Polish populations, the residents apparently support Lukashenka and pro-government 'alternative' head of the ZPB.

That is not to say that there are no tensions between Poles and Belarusians. Especially among the Orthodox population in the Western Belarus, there is still small residual suspicion based on the history of discrimination against Belarusians in inter-war Poland. But, once again, this creates the basis for a family squabble rather than an interethnic, or international conflict: the popular mentality largely identified 'Poles' with the upper crust of society and locals with the underprivileged common folk.

Nor, in all probability, was the attack instigated by Moscow. Yes, given the state of the Russian-Polish relations, the Kremlin has every reason to be glad about the spat. But it is high time people stopped thinking of Lukashenka as a kolkhoz simpleton and a puppet of Moscow. Here is a shrewd, experienced, and masterful politician who knows what he is doing and who weighs up the external environment carefully in his considerations. Lukashenka uses Russia's internal politics in his advantage in masterful fashion. By way of very public example, the Belarus strongman immediately seized on the massacre in the North Ossetian town of Beslan in September 2004 to favorably contrast his regime's stability with Russia's chaos during a referendum campaign to change the constitution.

No, the most credible conclusion is that the real target of the attacks against the ZPB is not Belarus' Polish community, but Poland itself. Lukashenka's reasons are not reduc-

ible to Russia's issues with Warsaw; Lukashenka had his own reasons to take on Poland.

### TARGET: POLAND

There are two reasons for this conclusion. First, Poland offers a rather attractive antithesis of the Lukashenka's Belarus. It therefore needs smearing, which Lukashenka duly does routinely. In most opinion polls, Belarusians rank Poland among the top two or three countries whose example of economic and political success they would like to emulate (the other two are usually Germany and Sweden). Several million Belarusians have traveled to Poland over the past 15 years, as "shuttle trade" tourism offered a realistic way of keeping their families alive. Of course, this positive perception of Poland is not overwhelming. Official propaganda routinely broadcasts horror pictures, selecting the most negative aspects of post-communist Poland, such as high unemployment, income inequality, the plight of the poor, and the grievances of farmers subjected to the European Union's stupendous regulations – and since this propaganda portrays the social groups (such as the urban lower classes, farmers, and pensioners) whose equivalents in Belarus constitute the backbone of Lukashenka's social base, the smear campaign is not entirely ineffective. Its impact is, however, limited.

Consider, for example, the hints in the official media that Poland and Belarus' ethnic Poles might, under certain circumstances, raise demands for territorial autonomy and even secession. That possibility was, for instance, raised just four days before the 2001 presidential elections, when the largest official daily Sovetskaya Belorussiya published a hoax report called 'Operation White Stork,' in which it claimed that victory by the opposition would be followed by the dismemberment of Belarus by its neighbors, including Poland, acting under the guidance of the United States. Few take these allegations too seriously: Poles in fact constitute a majority in just one of the 120 districts in Belarus, and that district does not even border Poland. Lukashenka therefore needs tools other than propaganda with which to limit the attractive pull that Poland offers Belarusians.

The second reason is that while Poland's policy towards Belarus is often criticized as weak and accommodating, it is undeniable that Poland is far more involved in promoting change in Belarus than any other country in the Western world, including, perhaps, the United States. Polish civil society is taking a clear lead. Over the past 15 years, it has invested huge efforts in promoting democracy, building up civil society, assisting democratically minded groups, and promoting 'civic Belarus' in the West. This interest and involvement is driven partly by pragmatic interest (Poland has a vital interest in the preservation of Belarus as an independent state and in its eventual democratization: it does not really want to see the Russian tanks cross the River Bug in the future) and partly by a sense of solidarity and memory.

The West greatly assisted in Poland's fight for democracy in the 1980s, and many Poles now feel a moral obligation to continue the work further east (not only in Belarus: Poland's involvement in strengthening civil society made

many headlines during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, for example). Unlike many of the efforts made by others in Belarus (particularly initiatives from Western Europe), Polish organizations have been particularly conscious and supportive of the Belarusian national revival. Many Belarusian-language historians and social thinkers have been published in Poland. Belarusian-language rock groups banned in the country find supporting and enthusiastic audiences in Poland. Even the largest annual festival of Belarusian rock music – Basovichcha – is held near Bialystok, in eastern Poland. And Poland is extremely supportive of the National Humanities Lyceum, the only specialized Belarusian-language high school in Minsk, which was closed down by the government in 2003. (Its students now take study vacations in Poland, for example.)

**Editor's note:** For additional details of Polish politics, vis-a-vis Belarus, presented by the author, the reader is directed to the complete article which is posted on Transitions Online: <http://www.tol.cz/>

### FAILED POLICIES?

Does that mean that Poland's policy towards Belarus was a failure, as opponents of the government in Warsaw insist? Would it have been better to find other ways to pressure and leverage Minsk right from the outset?

This criticism itself represents wishful thinking. First of all, outsiders' chances of leveraging Lukashenka out of power are few in number; some would even say they barely exist. Second, for such pressure to have any meaningful force, Warsaw would have needed to coordinate a more consistent foreign policy with the larger European Union – and Brussels has shown almost no interest in doing anything of that sort over the past decade. (Indeed, I suspect that, before engaging in this diplomatic war, the decision-makers in Lukashenka's entourage counted on several western EU members implicitly overlooking the conflict because of their somewhat strained relations with Poland. I am not suggesting EU member-states reacted like that – but it is undeniable that the EU effectively lacks a policy towards Belarus and is unable to react to situations like this.)

The criticism also fails to recognize that, for all their idealism and perhaps even naivete, Poland's attempts to open up a critical dialogue and make small steps in relations with Belarus was invariably more sound an farsighted than the EU's own policy. In 1999, the European Commission decided that the way forward was through a 'step-by-step' approach under which the EU takes steps towards Belarus if Belarus makes progress in democratization: if not, the EU does nothing. Since he is neither interested in democracy nor in the EU, nothing suited Lukashenka better than this 'policy.'

The criticism is also flawed for a third reason: Lukashenka's policy of preemption may involve taking action even against those who pose no threat, but it is not entirely born of paranoia. Minsk cracked down on the 'soft' elements of the Warsaw's overall policy only because it feared they might have worked eventually.

So what the Minsk-Warsaw conflict shows is not that Warsaw's policy was wrong. What it highlighted is that the range of policy options towards Lukashenka's Belarus is severely limited, and that European policy is not coherent, proactive, or sustained. Without a European policy with those virtues, Poland could do little.

What, then, can the EU do? It needs to collectively commit itself to promoting democracy (and not just to offering technical assistance through government-approved programs). It need to act in situations such as the ZPB affair, and not just react by issuing declarations of disapproval and regret. It needs to find ways of ensuring that Minsk loses something from these actions. It cannot wait (as it does now) for Belarus to make steps in the right direction before engaging, since Lukashenka will not take steps towards democracy. And, most importantly, it needs to demonstrate sustained, long-term commitment to promoting change in Belarus, rather than reacting to crisis situations on an ad hoc basis. Perhaps, then, the stakes for official Minsk would be raised. That might not stop it engaging in small propaganda wars, but it would make it think twice.

Source: Transitions Online (TOL); 25 August 2005

*Vitali Silitski is a long-time contributor to TOL. He has just completed a Reagan-Fascell fellowship at the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States*

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## Some Facts About The Poles in Belarus

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### Editorial Backgrounder

The national identity of this group is primarily defined by its affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church, not by its real ethnicity, which in modern times is rather based on the language its members use in their everyday life.

According to this latter criterion, the vast majority of Belarus' Poles are ethnically Belarusian, mostly using the Belarusian language in their daily life. (In recent time only in the former Yugoslavia were the ethnic groups defined by religion rather than by language. Serbo-Croatian was the common language of Muslim Bosnians, Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs.)

\* \* \*

*Christianity came to Belarus over thousand years ago in the Orthodox form via Kiev from Byzantium. Four centuries later, Roman Catholicism began making inroads as a result of the dynastic union between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Litva, a multinational state centered on the territory of Belarus, whose official language was Old Belarusian, somewhat based on Church Slavonic. Grand Duke Jahajla (Jagiello) converted to Catholicism, married the Polish Queen Jadwiga, thus becoming the founder of the long term Polish Jagiellonian dynasty.*

*The growing threat from the east by the expansionist Muscovite state resulted in the formation of a tighter Commonwealth*

*of the Crown of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Litva. It eventually led at the end of the 16th century to the formation of the Uniate Church in Belarus, one with traditional Orthodox liturgy but with allegiance to Rome. The Western cultural influence from Poland continued to gain ground, with the Grand Duchy's nobility and the ruling classes gradually converting to Catholicism, and adopting the Polish language as the state's official language in 1640, replacing the Old Belarusian. Such giants of Polish literature born in Belarus as Adam Mickiewicz and Henryk Sienkiewicz came out of this environment. The masses did not follow suit, with Belarusian thus becoming for centuries the language of the lower classes.*

*The ranks of Catholics in Belarus swelled in the 19th century with the liquidation of the Uniate Church, after the Commonwealth was absorbed into the Russian Empire. Its faithful were given a choice to either convert to Roman Catholicism or to the Orthodoxy with its familiar liturgy, even though now under Moscow's control. Russian authorities, intent on totally russifying and absorbing Belarus, gave preferential treatment to the Polish culture in Belarus, by equating religion with ethnicity. Being Catholic was in official view equal to being Polish, which made it more likely for the rest of the Orthodox population of Belarus, and of Ukraine as well, to become minor branches of the Great Russian nation. (This policy was later followed in the Soviet Union, where the census taker would automatically classify all Catholics as Poles, unless the individual protested such designation. It resulted in a great number of ethnic Belarusians defined as "passport Poles". Similar practice existed in Western Belarus which was a part of the Polish state between the two World Wars, administratively increasing the number of statistical Poles, and even creating a new ethnic category of "tutejshyja" or locals.)*

\* \* \*

This toleration of Polish influence and simultaneous discrimination of Belarusian culture is now intensified by the present Lukashenka regime, that allows Polish schools to operate, while Belarusian language schools are being closed or converted to Russian. Thanks to receiving generous financial support from neighboring Poland, the Union of Poles in Belarus (ZPB) became Belarus' strongest NGO. Yet, it was spared interference by Lukashenka's regime, while it was led by Tadeusz Kruczkowski, a Lukashenka loyalist and a self-professed enemy of the Belarusian language and culture.

This March, Kruczkowski was voted out of office and replaced by Angelika Borys, a young teacher in a Polish language school. In contrast to the previous leadership, Ms. Borys expressed willingness to resume cooperation with the Belarusian democratic forces, and in turn, earned their expressions of support.

Lukashenka's regime declared the election invalid, taking over the Union's office building, and organizing a new, closely supervised election with predictable results. By effectively gaining control of this organization, the regime hopes to have blunted Poland's efforts to engage with and support Belarusian forces aiming for a democratic change in the country.



## U.S. Academic Says Minsk In Anti-Western 'Cleanup'

By Jan Maksymiuk

Last week, Belarusian authorities gave U.S. professor Terry Boesch and his two daughters 24 hours to leave the country. Boesch, who taught business and law at Belarusian State University in Minsk since 2003, says the government did not explain its decision to deny his visa extension. But the professor believes his case is part of a campaign to rid Belarus of Western influence ahead of next year's general elections.

As Terry Boesch explains it, his sudden expulsion has no explanation -- at least, not officially. "The Belarusian government denied my visa and ordered me to leave the country on the same day [14 July]," he told RFE/RL. "But the government kept my documents and visa so I cannot leave the country until I get them back. I have been here for two years and I have shown by my behaviors and teaching that I am trying to help the Belarusian people."

However, Boesch has his own ideas of why he and his two daughters have been kicked out of Belarus. In a letter posted to the website of the Belarusian human rights group Charter-97, the American wrote, "Before taking part in the 2006 presidential election, [Belarusian President Alyaksandr] Lukashenka has started a big cleanup aimed at representatives of the West."

Boesch told RFE/RL that he has avoided politics and contacts with the opposition while staying in Belarus, where he has concentrated on academic and humanitarian activities, including the organization of exchanges for Belarusian students, visits of guest lecturers, and donations of English-language textbooks. "We were able to attract some interest from schools and libraries in the United States who donated more than 40,000 books," Boesch said. "I paid for the shipping of the two large ocean-going containers to get [them] here. Unfortunately, I contacted the Ministry of Education here in Belarus when that happened, suggesting that I thought we could bring over 400,000 books, but there just has not been an interest in bringing English textbooks, or English-language books, into Belarus by this government."

Boesch's case is not the first expulsion of a Western educator from Belarus. In July 2004, Belarusian authorities invalidated a multiple-entry visa for Alan Flowers, an expert in radiology based at Kingston University in London, and banned him from visiting the country for the next five years. No official reason for Flowers' expulsion has ever been given. Like Boesch, Flowers was careful to steer clear of what in the West would be termed "politics." What he did, however, was to foster pro-democracy activities among Belarusian students -- debate and discussion clubs -- and to assist them to participate in such activities at an international level.

But promoting democratic ideas among Belarusian students, or simply exposing them to ideas not supported by the state, is what Lukashenka abhors in the first place in his attempt to reconstruct Soviet-style education in Belarus.

Last year, state ideology was introduced as an obligatory course at all universities in Belarus, both private and state-run. In July 2004, the government closed the privately funded European Humanities University (EHU) in Minsk, a school that provided Western-style education and promoted the exchange of ideas between students from Belarus and the West. Lukashenka subsequently acknowledged that the EHU was closed because it was training a new Belarusian elite that would make the nation pro-Western. Earlier this year, the EHU reopened in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Boesch says that Belarusian State University has been undergoing a process of "continued politicization" and isolation from international contacts following the appointment of former Education Minister Vasil Strazhau as rector in November 2003. "One of the first things that the new rector did was to cancel the international relations pro-rector's position," he said. "So, the Belarusian State University, to my knowledge, is the only university now in Europe without an international relations vice president or vice rector. Second, there has been an elimination of at least three international programs that have been long-standing in our university." Boesch said he is planning to leave Belarus with his two daughters on 20 July for Lithuania, where he said he hopes to relax after "72 hours of hell" in Minsk after he was told to leave.

(RFE/RL's Belarus Service and Irena Chalupa of RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service contributed to this report.)

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## EU Broadcasting Project Comes Under Fire

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By Ahto Lobjakas.

European Parliament deputies representing mostly new member states on 14 September attacked plans announced by the European Commission to fund independent radio and television broadcasts to Belarus. Deputies complained at a meeting of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee that the funds were insufficient, the tendering rules discriminate against countries bordering Belarus, and too much emphasis is being put on the use of Russian language in the putative broadcasts.

Many members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were particularly scathing about the commission's perceived preference for Russian over Belarusian as the main language for the planned broadcasts.

Former Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis was one of a number of MEPs from former communist countries who warned the commission it risks complicity in Russia's longstanding ambitions to "Russify" its neighbors. Landsbergis demanded assurances Belarusian will feature alongside Russian in broadcasts to Belarus. "I would like to be sure that [the] formula 'Russian and Belarusian' -- at least -- is not to be interpreted as 'Russian or Belarusian,'" Landsbergis said. "Or, in turn, that it is [not interpreted to be] an issue to be decided by Deutsche Welle."

Deutsche Welle last month became the first media company to be awarded a commission contract to broadcast to Belarus. The commission first said broadcasts would use Russian, with the possibility of Belarusian being added at a later, unspecified date (see "RFE/RL Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova Report," 24 August 2005). Some Western European MEPs pointed out that more than 60 percent of the population of Belarus considers itself ethnically Russian. Their appeals to pragmatism were drowned by protestations from representatives of smaller, Eastern European member states. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, an Estonian and a vice chairman of the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, noted that **indigenous languages, not Russian, had served as the main vehicles for democratic change in Eastern Europe.** He also appealed to the national awareness of smaller Western European countries.

"Imagine if in this parliament we said 'Well, all the Slovaks understand Czech, all the Danes understand Swedish, all the Portuguese understand Spanish, and all the Dutch understand German? What would be the reaction here?' Ilves asked. "We can say, of course, 'All the Belarusians understand Russian,' but what does that mean for the people you are talking to?" Most speakers also dismissed the 2 million euros (\$2.4 million) earmarked by the commission for two years' TV and radio broadcasts as by far insufficient. The commission's tendering rules, requiring applying media organizations to demonstrate an annual turnover of 3 million euros, were described as designed to exclude companies from neighboring Poland and Lithuania. The strategy also appears to sideline the 500,000 ethnic Belarusians living in Poland and the three Baltic States, who a number of MEPs said would be best-placed to reach out to their compatriots.

Polish MEPs were particularly scathing in their judgments of the commission's performance. They accused the EU's executive of dragging its feet, pointing out Polish parliamentarians had been spearheading demands for action for over a year.

Ilves, a former director of RFE/RL's Estonian Service, also warned that the 2 million-euro budget for television and radio broadcasts stretched over two years would allow for "minuscule" amounts of programming.

A number of MEPs also attacked current EU funding rules that require it to clear assistance with the government of the country targeted. Edward Mcmillan Scott, a leading British conservative MEP, was among those suggesting the EU must overhaul the system to allow it to finance organizations that may be illegitimate in the eyes of regime's such as President Aliaksandr Lukashenka's.

"TACIS [the main EU aid program for the former Soviet Union] must be flanked by an external fund for Belarus that is managed and disbursed by the commission with assistance from a small number of interested member states," McMillan Scott said. "Such a fund needs to operate outside the strict guidelines of the commission. The purpose and mission of the fund would be to offer fast and flexible support to Belarusian democratic forces and NGOs that fall outside the parameters of current EU regulations and often have to operate on an illegal basis inside the country."

A representative of the European Commission, Hugues Mingarelli, present at the debate, offered a defense of its record and assured the MEPs of its continuing commitment to promote reforms in Belarus. However, he did not address the criticism offered by MEPs in any detail beyond saying that it is "a fact that today more people in Belarus speak Russian than Belarusian."

**Source:** RFE/RL Report on Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, Sept. 16, 2005.

## ECONOMY

### Growth or Development?

By Uladzia Kalupajeu

Statistics say that the Belarusian economy is growing. The question is, is the growth related to development and is it sustainable? The numbers alone don't tell the whole story. Statistics can be manipulated and "growth" can happen anywhere - even in a dump. Let's take a look at the Belarusian economy through the prism of the economic theory of Belarusian-born Simon Kuznets, winner of a Nobel prize in economics and author of *Modern Economic Growth* (1966).

For the last ten years Belarus, rate of economic growth has been surpassing that of most developed countries. And yet Simon Kuznets wrote that any country may reach the level of a developed market economy — if it passes through the stage of what he termed modern economic growth. To accomplish this transition, what is needed is a period of swift economic growth in the range of 10% annually, and a prolonged "destructive" process, that contributes to significant transformations in the economy and social structure of the society. These transformations include radical changes in the conditions of life and work, as well as a lower birth rate.

#### Structural transformations in the economy

Has Belarus entered the stage of modern economic growth? First, have there been structural transformations in the economy? According to Kuznets, a distinct sign of the transition process would be a decrease in the number of employees in sectors of the economy: to 5% in the agricultural sector, and to 30% in manufacturing and construction, while the remaining 65% would be concentrated in services.

In Belarus the percentage of workers in the agricultural sector indeed dropped from 19.1 (in 1995) to 11 (in 2003). During the same period the share of workers in manufacturing and construction dropped only 1% from 35% to 34%. Thus, for this period the service sector still accounts for about 55% of jobs, which is significantly lower than what Kuznets's theory stipulates.

The contribution from the service sector to Belarus, Gross National Product (GNP) in 2003 was even lower — 45.9% (having increased by 3.7% in the preceding ten years). For comparison, in Denmark the service sector accounts for

72.1% of the GNP. The claimed growth in Belarusian GNP from this sector is mostly due to the reduction of agriculture's share of the GNP — which dropped from 15.1% in 1995 to 7.7% in 2003, as well as the decrease in manufacturing's share which decreased from 27.6% to 25.5%. In the meantime the construction sector's contribution to the GNP grew from 5.4% to 6%.

The share of the Belarusian GNP from "other services" grew insignificantly from 22.4% to 25.6%. For comparison, in Denmark "other services" constitute 50.9% of GNP. The remaining 5.7% is due to the growth of net tax revenue. There is an obvious trend in the economy toward the increase in the share of services, but it is happening very slowly. If the rate of change remains as slow as it is now, it will take Belarus' economy 25 years to reach the alignments now existing in Denmark.

Underdevelopment of the service industry in the national economy is also confirmed by the statistical data related to foreign trade. Share of services in the overall export volume was 14.8% last year, while the average in the world trade is around 30%. Furthermore, services offered by Belarus are not especially high-tech dominated. In world trade the current trend is to offer ever more high-tech services to sectors such as finance, management and Industrial Technology. The worldwide make-up of this component of the service sector is 47%, while in Belarus this component of services amounts to only 22%.

Another area is tourism. Worldwide it covers over one third of overall service trade, but in Belarus it makes up only 17% of exported services. Furthermore, among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe Belarus shares last place with Moldova — with tourist services making up 0.1% of the GNP. For comparison, corresponding figures for the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia are 6.6%, 5.0% and 2.4%, respectively. On the other hand, the worldwide share of less high-tech-intensive basic services such as transportation, gradually decreased to 22%, while in Belarus it keeps growing and currently amounts to 61%. The positive trade balance in the services sector in 2004 (743.9 million dollars) was achieved mostly due to transportation services (91%).

The numbers show that the economic growth of the last 10 years did not lead to any substantial structural transformations in economy. The figures related to the service sector are very supportive of this conclusion. Still, it's worth noting that there exists a long-term trend to decrease the shares of agriculture and manufacturing, and to increase that of services. This, in spite of the government's economic policy clearly encouraging manufacturing of goods, while paying no attention to the development of the service sector.

### **The proportional weight of village women**

Simon Kuznets argues that improvements in living and working conditions following the prolonged period of economic growth leads to a decreased birth rate, which is preceded by a phase of radical changes in demographics when a majority of the population is concentrated in cities. The same is happening in Belarus.

The main factor defining Belarus' population decrease since 1993 is not the decline of living standards, but changes in the regional structure of demographics for women of child-bearing age (15-49 years). The bigger the city, and the higher the population density, the lower the birth rate. For the last 46 years in Belarus the proportion of women of child-bearing age living in rural areas has been decreasing by 1% each year. In 1959 this group made up 65% of the population, but in 2003 only 21.7%. Despite the fact that today there are 2.67 million women capable of producing children (more than in the 1960's and 1970's, and about the same as in 1980's), very few of them are living in rural areas. Even though the birth rate is typically 1.4 times higher in rural areas than in the cities, this rate is not high enough to result in an overall population increase.

If the proportion of women living in rural areas today were the same as in 1989, then these same women, who since have moved to the cities, would deliver in 2003 about 60,000 more babies. Thus, the birth rate index would have been +0.5, instead of the present -5.0.

The overall urbanization process in Belarus began earlier and was not caused by economic factors, which Kuznets notes for other countries. The population shift to Belarusian cities has some historical reasons, foremost by the destruction of 400,000 small farmsteads around the time of World War II.

### **After the victory over the farmers**

Former Soviet republics where the Bolsheviks subjugated the farmers today exhibit higher negative birth rate indexes (Ukraine — 7.5, Russia — 6.2) than post-socialist countries where collectivization was not carried out so extensively (Poland — 0.1, Slovakia — 0.1, Czech Republic — 1.5). The impossibility of gaining a profit from the land in order to secure a decent standard of living is the main reason why people tend to leave the countryside.

In the Czech Republic today there is no big difference where you conduct your business — be it in a city or in a rural area. And it's not surprising that in the last ten years the population of Prague has decreased by 100,000 people. In northern Poland families usually have four or more children so that they will have more help on the family farm. The economic growth in Belarus in the last ten years has been a secondary factor and did not result in any radical changes in the established trend of migration to the cities.

### **Economic growth and migration**

The sharp decline in the birth rate in Belarus in the last 15 years warrants an explanation. In rural areas, for instance, the coefficient was 2.5 children per woman in 1989, and was only 1.6 in 2002. The reason for this could be the lowering of children's mortality rate, or it could be due to the process of market transformations which forced many people to change their accustomed ways of life and work and adapt to the new conditions.

The economist Mitrafan Dounar-Zapolski stated that "while working to improve the structure of the economy, population at the same time may reduce the birth rate in order to maintain the well-being of the current generations."

With a certain degree of risk we can predict that once the market transition is accomplished and there is less uncertainty (which seems to be the main reason for the reduced birth rate), people will be having more children. That could happen, for example, once we have a fully-functional market economy like exists in some other Central and Eastern European countries.

### **Economic growth and distribution of the national income**

Kuznets derived a law of economics named for him which says essentially: the first ten years of a swift economic growth in a country that embraced the path of development is accompanied by a sharp increase of inequality of distribution of wealth; but after a while the this inequality begins to decrease. This should be especially characteristic for countries without any large-scale foreign investments. If we believe Kuznets's Law, then Belarus during the last ten years should have experienced increasing disparity in the population's incomes. However, this process was virtually absent. In spite of the fact that Belarus for ten years had the lowest quintile coefficient in the world (defined as the income of the richest 20% of the population divided by the income of the poorest 20% poorest part of the population in a country), which was equal to 3 (i.e. the richest part of the Belarus society is only three times richer than the poorest), and in 2002 it grew a little and was equal to 4. For comparison, in Poland, which has been the leader in attracting foreign investments during the time of transition, the quintile coefficient grew from 4 to 6, and in Moldova it grew from 6 to 10. It's worth noting that the quintile coefficient is calculated on basis of opinion polls of households and also takes into account profits from the shadow or black market sector of economy.

Thus, a specific feature of Belarus, economy remains the very even distribution of national income among the population. This is a good thing from the point of view of the tenets of socialism, but it is a rather bad thing if your objective is a transition to a market economy, because it indicates the absence of the middle class that could use its savings to propel further development of economy by investing into it.

### **When will Belarusians live like the Germans ?**

It is obvious that certain structural transformations in the economy, demographics and national income are taking place in Belarus. However they are probably caused rather by the general geopolitical and economical changes that took place in the Central and Eastern European region, than by the results of internal economic growth. These structural transformations are very sluggish since they are taking place, one might say, despite the official economic directives. Belarus has not yet entered the stage which Kuznets called the period of modern economic growth, and if nothing changes, this will probably not happen in the near future.

This article appeared in *Nasha Niva*, April 1, 2005.  
English translation by Uladzimir Katkouski

## **CHORNOBYL LEGACY**

### **Activists, Experts Dispute UN Report on Chornobyl**

Environmental activists and researchers in some of the countries most affected by the Chornobyl disaster have rejected a new United Nations report that says the consequences of the 1986 explosion in the Ukrainian nuclear plant were not as dire as predicted.

Nataliya Preobrazhenska heads the Save The Ukrainian Children from the Chornobyl Catastrophe foundation and is a consultant to the Committee on Radiation Security of the parliament of Ukraine. She told RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service that the 1986 explosion at the Chornobyl nuclear power plant continues to cause serious health and environmental problems for people living in the affected areas. "We must all know that we are not living after [the Chornobyl catastrophe], but [still] during the Chornobyl catastrophe," she said.

Preobrazhenska was reacting to the new report released by the Chernobyl Forum, a group involving experts from eight UN agencies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The report found that besides thousands of workers who were exposed to high doses of radiation in the early days of the accident and thousands stricken with thyroid cancer, the impact on the rest of the population was not as severe as feared.

The report concludes that the death toll caused by radiation could reach a total of 4,000, which is much lower than previous estimates. Such a conclusion could affect national and international programs dedicated to helping people in the most affected areas of the disaster in Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. Preobrazhenska believes that the report does not tell the whole story. "It's horrible, the IAEA statement is criminal!" she said. "I think it's time for The Hague court to look at our figures and at what the IAEA says."

Preobrazhenska said that the cancer rate in the region remains high as a result of radiation exposure caused by the accident. She said that only in 2003, more than 150,000 new cases of cancer were registered in Ukraine.

Yury Bandazheuski, a prominent Belarusian researcher on the effects of radiation exposure, also does not agree with some of the findings of the UN report. Bandazheuski was conditionally released from prison in early August after having served four years of what had originally been an eight-year sentence. He was convicted of taking bribes in exchange for admitting students while serving as rector of a medical institute in Homel. Bandazheuski denies the charges, saying the Belarusian authorities were taking revenge on him for highlighting the disastrous effects of the Chornobyl accident. In an interview with RFE/RL's Belarusian Service.

Bandazheuski questioned the methods used by the UN scientists and researchers who prepared the report: "Has

any of those scientists spent an extended period of time in the Homel region studying the condition of children? Only after that can one say whether or not the small radiation factor has any impact on people's condition. Or did they just make two- or three-day trips, wave their hands and leave? This is why they made such conclusions."



*Prof. Bandazheuski*

Ivan Nikitchanka, a member of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences and long-time researcher into Chernobyl-related issues, also criticized the report. He told RFE/RL's Belarusian Service that UN agencies and the Belarusian government are ignoring the impact of the nuclear disaster.

"People are continuing to die as they did before; they are getting sick as they did before. There is no movement — and no IAEA, no World Health Organization will help us...doesn't even have the intention of helping us," Nikitchanka said. "For them, it's important to stifle our problems so people don't know about them, because this would affect their business. They didn't protect the population from the disaster. And there will be no results from this forum. Why? Because comrade [Belarusian President Alyakandr] Lukashenka said, 'Starting from 2001, there is no longer any Chernobyl problem.' That's it."

The UN report has been also criticized by some environmental groups in Norway and Russia, another affected country. Vladimir Chuprov, coordinator of Greenpeace Russia, was quoted by AP as saying that the report did not take into account premature deaths caused by the accident.

At the opening of the Chernobyl Forum meeting in Vienna on 6 September, which is being held under the aegis of the IAEA, Russia's representative Nadezda Gerasimova reportedly said that Chernobyl's main fallout was "social" rather than "radiological." She added that the time had come to cut some benefits to people in the affected areas.

Greenpeace International said yesterday that the UN report "whitewashes" the impact of the world's worst nuclear accident. Bellona, a Norwegian environmental group, said the report reflects only "a small fraction" of the disaster's real impact.

**Source:** RFE/RL Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova Report, September 7, 2005.

## NEWS BRIEFS

*The source of items in the NEWS BRIEFS section is the RFE/RL Newsline, unless otherwise indicated.*

### 1. POLITICAL OPPOSITION

**July 11, 2005**

#### **BELARUSIAN VENDOR LEAVES PRISON UNDER AMNESTY**

Alyaksandr Vasilyeu, leader of a market vendors' strike committee in Hrodna who was convicted of defaming Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, was released from prison on 7 July under a recent amnesty law, BelaPAN reported on 8 July. Vasilyeu and his associate Valery Levaneuski were sentenced to two years in prison each in September, after the court found them guilty of insulting Lukashenka in a leaflet advertising a May Day protest earlier last year. Levaneuski continues to serve his prison sentence.

**July 26, 2005**

#### **KAZULIN ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF BELARUSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

Former Belarusian State University rector Alyaksandr Kazulin was elected chairman of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Hramada) at its 24 July convention in the House of Writers in central Minsk, BelaPAN reported on 25 July. The party was formed in April by uniting the Belarusian Social Democratic Assembly and the Belarusian Social Democratic Party-Popular Assembly. Police officers and plainclothes agents arrived at the meeting halfway through the convention and ordered all delegates to leave the premises because of an alleged bomb threat, according to the party's press office. However, the delegates ended the convention only after electing Kazulin party leader.

**July 29, 2005**

#### **PUTIN REMARK ON RUSSIA, BELARUS AS 'ONE NATION' DISPUTED**

The political council of the United Civic Party described Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent remark that the Belarusians and Russians are "one nation" as politically incorrect, BelaPAN reported on 28 July. "The statement casts doubt on the historic past, cultural heritage, and the language of the Belarusians, as well as on their right to statehood," the council said in a statement.

**Aug. 17, 2005**

#### **BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION ELECTS NEARLY 200 CANDIDATES TO PRESIDENTIAL-NOMINATION CONGRESS**

Five Belarusian opposition parties have so far elected 194 candidates throughout Belarus to a national congress that is to name a single opposition candidate to challenge President Alyaksandr Lukashenka in the 2006 presidential election, Belapan reported on 16 August. In the past two months the parties held more than 100 raion-level conferences involving more than 4,000 representatives of opposition forces and nongovernmental organizations, frequently under the open sky outside cities because local authorities often refuse to provide venues for such gatherings. Alyaksandr Bukhvostau, head of the organizing committee for the congress, told BelaPAN that the committee sent a letter on 16

August to Lukashenka asking him to help find a hall for the presidential-nomination congress. Bukhvostau added that the committee is also mulling the possibility of holding such a congress abroad.

**Aug. 19, 2005**

### **PRISON SENTENCE FOR BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION-IST CUT BY ONE YEAR UNDER AMNESTY.**

Opposition politician Mikhail Marynich's prison sentence of 3 1/2 years has been reduced by one year under an amnesty law passed earlier this year on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, BelaPAN reported on 18 August, quoting the politician's son, Ihar Marynich. Mikhail Marynich, a former minister and diplomat in President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's government, was sentenced to five years in prison in December 2004 on what is widely believed to be a politically motivated charge. In February, Marynich had his prison sentence reduced to 3 1/2 years for his "past services to the state" and "failing health."

## **2. BELARUS and the WORLD**

**June 9, 2005**

### **POLL SAYS NEARLY HALF OF BELARUSIANS WANT TO JOIN EU**

The Independent Institute for Socioeconomic and Political Studies (NISEPI) found in a poll conducted in cooperation with independent Belarusian sociologists and a Bratislava-based foundation among 1,510 Belarusians in May that 47 percent of respondents would welcome Belarus' accession to the EU, while 35 percent said they would be against such a move, BelaPAN reported on 8 June. NISEPI noted that the percentage of Belarusians advocating their country's EU membership has hit an all-time high this year, as only one in four respondents wanted Belarus to join the EU in a similar survey last June. "Belarusian citizens have started to realize the obvious advantages of such a move: easy formalities for traveling to Europe, the opportunity to work, spend a vacation, and receive education there," sociologist Uladzimir Dorakhau commented on the findings, while presenting the poll's results at the Lithuanian Embassy in Minsk. NISEPI was banned by the Belarusian authorities in April and has subsequently moved to Vilnius.

**June 10, 2005**

### **CLOSED BELARUSIAN UNIVERSITY REOPENS IN LITHUANIA.**

The European Humanitarian University (EHU), which was shut down by the Belarusian Education Ministry in July 2004, will reopen in Vilnius, RFE/RL's Belarus Service and Reuters reported on 9 June. "We salute your determination and courage to work for the future of a democratic and prosperous Belarus from your outpost in Vilnius," Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus said at an EHU inauguration ceremony in the Lithuanian capital on 9 June. The EHU, which currently has some 600 students, will reportedly receive 1.44 million euros (\$1.8 million) from the U.S. State Department and U.S. foundations and 488,000 euros from the EU for the upcoming academic year. The government closed the Minsk-based EHU, citing violations of its operating license, but President Lukashenka subsequently revealed that the main motive behind the closure was the fact that the university had trained Western-oriented students.

**Aug. 12, 2005**

### **SWEDISH DIPLOMAT TO HEAD OSCE OFFICE IN BELARUS**

Swedish career diplomat Ake Peterson will head the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office in Minsk, RFE/RL's Belarus Service and BelaPAN reported on 11 July, citing the Belarusian Foreign Ministry. Peterson was appointed to his position earlier this month by the OSCE chairman in office, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel. Peterson, who is expected in Minsk in late August, will replace Eberhard Heyken of Germany, whose term expired last month.

**Aug. 30, 2005**

### **'BELARUSIAN HOUSE' TO OPEN IN WARSAW**

Warsaw Mayor Lech Kaczynski, who is also a leading candidate in the upcoming presidential election in Poland, said on 29 August that Warsaw will open a "Belarusian House" to host representatives of the Belarusian opposition and nongovernmental organizations as well as those members of the Union of Poles in Belarus (SPB) who do not support the SPB leadership elected last week, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reported. "Belarusian House is a working name," Marek Bucko, a former diplomat expelled from Minsk, explained to journalists. "It will be a conference center with a hotel. This house will allow us to organize seminars, meetings, and lectures.... I hope that it will also accommodate the editorial staff of an independent radio station that is going to broadcast to Belarus." Bucko did not say when the house will be opened but stressed that its establishment will be supported by the Warsaw mayoralty jointly with a number of foundations.

**Aug. 31, 2005**

### **BRUSSELS TO SEND ENVOY TO MINSK TO MONITOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said in Budapest on 30 August that the commission is planning to send a charge d'affaires to Minsk to monitor the human rights situation in Belarus, Reuters reported.

**Sept. 9, 2005**

### **WARSAW, MINSK EXCHANGE HARSH WORDS OVER ETHNIC CONVENTION**

Belarusian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ruslan Yesin said on 8 September that the Polish government is trying to provoke a "new split" within the Union of Poles in Belarus (SPB) by extending support to the old SPB leadership that was replaced last month, BelaPAN reported. Yesin was commenting on the Polish Foreign Ministry's statement earlier this month, in which Warsaw charged that the election of a new SPB leadership in August took place at a convention orchestrated by Belarusian special services. The Polish ministry said that Warsaw will back the SPB's leaders elected at a convention in March and will devise ways of efficient cooperation with the Polish ethnic community in Belarus. "It is unclear how a governmental agency, moreover that of a foreign country, may recognize or not recognize the leadership of a nongovernmental organization in a neighboring country," Yesin noted. Meanwhile, former SPB leader Andzelika Borys, who was replaced in August, met with EU officials and lawmakers in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 8 September. Borys was accompanied by Donald Tusk, deputy speaker of the Polish parliament and a frontrunner in Poland's presidential race.

### 3. REGIME ACTIONS and STATEMENTS

June 27, 2005

#### **RUSSIA-BELARUS UNION CONSTITUTION DRAFT MAY BE READY BY 2006**

Boris Gryzlov, speaker of the Russian State Duma, told journalists on 24 June that a draft constitutional act of the Russia-Belarus Union may be put on the agenda of the union's Supreme State Council before the end of this year, BelaPAN reported. Gryzlov was speaking following a session of the Russia-Belarus Union's Parliamentary Assembly in Homel, southeastern Belarus. Gryzlov said he and Belarusian Chamber of Representatives speaker Uladzimir Kanaplyou have been named co-chairmen of a joint task force for drawing up the constitutional act. The group is expected to meet in late September and hold another meeting before December. "I believe that the two meetings may be enough for preparing a document that could be submitted to the Supreme State Council," Gryzlov noted. Earlier last week, Russia-Belarus Union State Secretary Pavel Borodin said in Moscow that Russian President Vladimir Putin could become president of the Russia-Belarus Union. According to Borodin, the election of the union president could be held as soon as in 2006.

June 29, 2005

#### **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT CLAIMS TO HAVE CURTAILED FOREIGN 'IDEOLOGICAL EXPANSION'**

Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 28 June met with young people who have been or are being supported from two presidential funds for talented students, Belarusian Television reported. The Belarusian president said the funds have been set up over the past decade to prevent a brain drain from Belarus. "The best graduates from our higher educational institutions and young cultural activists sought to find jobs abroad, and the hunting — in the full meaning of the word — for such people was colossal," Lukashenka said. "We have curbed the activity of foreign grant makers who carried out ideological expansion to Belarus under the guise of humanitarian aid [and] organized the departure of our specialists and scientists abroad, essentially stealing the intellectual property of our state."

June 30, 2005

#### **BELARUS INTRODUCES FEES FOR BORDER CROSSING.**

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka signed a decree on 29 June allowing the oblast councils and the Minsk City Council to collect fees from Belarusian citizens and foreigners crossing the Belarusian border, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reported. The individual fee should not exceed 6,375 rubles (nearly \$3). "This [decree] only testifies that our state is insufficiently civilized. It also means that for foreigners our state will become even less attractive from the viewpoint of tourist and business trips," Syarhey Balykin, a commentator for the *Belorusskiy rynok* weekly, told RFE/RL. "I think there is also hatred from the side of the authorities toward those citizens who travel abroad for vacation. High-ranking state officials may not travel to Europe — first, they are not invited; second, there is a list of officials banned from traveling there," former Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Sannikau commented.

July 1, 2005

#### **BELARUS UNVEILS 'STALIN LINE' MEMORIAL**

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 30 June attended the official unveiling of partly restored World War II for-

tifications called the Stalin Line near Zaslaul, some 30 kilometers from Minsk, RFE/RL's Belarus Service and BelaPAN reported. The renewed memorial includes engineering installations dating from 1931-32, machine-gun pillboxes, and some World War II weaponry. The opening ceremony before some 10,000 spectators was followed by a theatrical battle show involving equipment and troops clad in Nazi and Soviet uniforms of the World War II period.

July 7, 2005

#### **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT DECREES NEW RULES FOR FUNDS**

Alyaksandr Lukashenka on 1 July issued an edict on setting up, registering, and liquidating funds in Belarus, which is to come into force on 1 September, BelaPAN reported, quoting the presidential press service. According to the press service, the decree enlarges the list of "socially useful purposes" for which a fund can be established by adding support of sports and science. The Justice Ministry has been authorized to consider applications for the registration of national and international funds, whereas the justice departments of the regional executive committees and the Minsk City Executive Committee will decide on the registration of local funds. Lawyer Syarhey Balykin told BelaPAN that the decree actually restricts the list of potential purposes of Belarusian funds. Under the decree, Balykin stressed, a fund will now have no right to finance activities relating to finding out or influencing public opinion. "It is unclear on what grounds the edict bans funds for supporting people with certain political views," he said, adding that the restriction in fact bars the creation of funds to conduct polls, which he said is especially important in the runup to the 2006 presidential election.

July 15, 2005

#### **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT REVEALS HE HAS NO FRIENDS...**

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka said in an interview with Russia's TV-Tsentr on 11 July that he has no friends, BelaPAN reported. Responding to a remark by the interviewer that "the presidency is a colossal solitude," Lukashenka said this description touches a "sensitive spot" in him. "This is the hardest thing, and...it tends to grow," Lukashenka went on. "It is getting bigger and bigger over the years. Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin], my good colleague and friend, has friends. I cannot boast the same thing." Lukashenka added that he has always envied Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov, who has many friends. "He is a different character, not like me," the Belarusian president noted.

July 15, 2005

#### **..AND DECLARES READINESS TO DEFEND HIS POWER ALONE, WITH ARMS**

Answering a question about his dream in the same interview with TV-Tsentr on 11 July, President Lukashenka recalled former Chilean President Salvador Allende. "Salvador Allende was an example in history. I will defend my people, my state, and my power with arms in my hands, alone if necessary. No matter whether you like it or not," Lukashenka said. "Defending my power, I do not defend wealth that I have amassed, etc. I am a man of ideals, principles, and a very proud man in this respect. I will defend it without fear. I will not flee the country even if they shoot at me." Allende, the Socialist president who ruled Chile from 1970-73, died while defending the presidential palace from a military coup.

**July 15, 2005**

## **BELARUS TO REDUCE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN HUMANITIES**

Education Minister Alyaksandr Radzkou told journalists in Minsk on 13 July that Belarus has too many universities offering studies in the humanities and nontechnical fields, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reported. Radzkou said the state will gradually diminish this superfluity by closing branches of primarily private universities. State Monitoring Committee Chairman Anatol Tozik, who attended the same news conference, said the government will also reduce humanities faculties at state-run universities. "After graduating from higher-educational institutions, lawyers, psychologists, and economists are forced to register as jobless people," Tozik said. "We need to regulate the education of specialists in the humanities and to significantly reduce their number, including at state higher-educational institutions. Do you see what we have at the faculty of international relations of Belarusian State University? We have already trained diplomats."

**July 18, 2005**

## **BELARUS EXPELS ANOTHER POLISH DIPLOMAT**

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry has ordered that Andrzej Buczak, director of the consular department of the Polish Embassy in Minsk, leave Belarus. Polish and Belarusian media reported on 15 July. Minsk said that the decision to expel Buczak was a reaction to the Polish Foreign Ministry's decision of 15 July to expel an unnamed counselor at the Belarusian Embassy in Warsaw by 20 July. In May, Minsk expelled another Polish diplomat, Marek Bucko. Polish Foreign Minister Andrzej Rotfeld told Polish Radio on 16 July that Minsk's recent hostile steps toward Polish diplomats and the Union of Poles in Belarus mean that Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka "is looking for an enemy." Rotfeld stressed that he is surprised by the latest diplomatic expulsion from Minsk, particularly since Polish National Security Bureau chief Jerzy Bahr and Belarusian Security Council Secretary Henadz Nyavyhlas have recently met in Belarus and drawn up a "road map" to ameliorate relations.

**July 19, 2005**

## **BELARUS EXPELS U.S. PROFESSOR**

The Belarusian authorities on 18 July ordered that U.S. professor Terry Boesch leave Belarus with his two daughters in the following 24 hours, RFE/RL's Belarus Service and the Charter-97 website (<http://www.charter97.org>) reported. Boesch has taught international law at Belarusian State University in Minsk for the past two years. "Before taking part in the 2006 presidential election, [Belarusian President Alyaksandr] Lukashenka has started a big clean-up aimed at representatives of the West," Boesch commented on his expulsion in a letter posted on the Charter-97 website. The U.S. professor said he avoided politics and contacts with the opposition while staying in Belarus, where he concentrated on academic and humanitarian activities, including the organization of book donations, exchanges for Belarusian students, and visits of guest lecturers. "I think I'm the last man from the West in Belarus who has tried to understand the Belarusian authorities and work with them in order to help this country," Boesch wrote in his letter.

**Aug. 2, 2005**

## **MINSK SUGGESTS REFORMING OSCE**

Belarusian Foreign Minister Syarhey Martynau said in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Vremya novostei* on 1 August that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Eu-

rope (OSCE) needs "serious reform." According to Martynau, the OSCE is biased toward certain regions and issues. "Today almost all its activity boils down to actions in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Central Asia and the Caucasus. Aren't there any problems in Western Europe? Surely, there are," he argued. According to him, the OSCE's election monitoring is also biased. "When elections are conducted in Belarus or Kazakhstan, thousands of observers are sent there, but when an election is held in the United States, 25 people go there. Are these conditions fair? And why are only representatives of countries located west of Vienna on observation missions?" Martynau asked. Russian officials have repeatedly expressed similar criticisms of the OSCE in recent months.

**Aug. 8, 2005**

## **BELARUS SEEKS TALKS WITH POLAND IN WAKE OF LATEST DIPLOMATIC EXPULSION**

A senior Belarusian official suggested after the latest in a series of mutual diplomatic expulsions between Minsk and Warsaw on 5 August that the two sides sit down to negotiate an end to the row. PAP and international media reported the same day. The move came after a third round of tit-for-tat ejections that began after Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka accused Poland of interfering in Belarus' affairs two months ago. Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Alyaksandr Mikhnevich said his country is ready for talks to resolve the dispute and suggested that "the initiative is on the Polish side" now that equal numbers of diplomats have been expelled, according to PAP. "The number of diplomats expelled by each side now stands at four, and there is no need to continue these exchanges," Mikhnevich was quoted by DPA as saying. "We call on our Polish colleagues to enter into talks to normalize relations."

**Aug. 10, 2005**

## **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS BARRED FROM ENTERING BELARUS**

Belarusian border guards on 8 August denied entry to four Polish members of the European Parliament — European Parliament Deputy Speaker Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, and deputies Bogdan Klich, Barbara Kudrycka, and Boguslaw Sonik. Polish and international media reported. The four were traveling to Belarus accompanied by the mayor of Bialystok, a city in northeastern Poland with a substantial ethnic Belarusian population, and a journalist. "I think it's time for the European Union to take very serious steps regarding the situation in Belarus, because the fact that European Parliament representatives were not let into Belarus should be considered as a no-confidence vote from the Belarusian authorities toward the whole European Union, and not only Poland," Saryusz-Wolski commented. Jacques Nancy, spokesman for the European Parliament president, told journalists later the same day that the four Polish parliamentarians were not an official delegation of the European Parliament. They intended to meet with the beleaguered leadership of the Union of Poles of Belarus.

**Aug. 18, 2005**

## **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT TIGHTENS RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has issued a decree prohibiting organizations and individuals from receiving and using foreign technical assistance for purposes deemed "unconstitutional," Belapan reported on 17 August, citing the presidential press service. In particular, the decree restricts providing such assistance for seminars, conferences, and public discussions. The organiza-



ers of such events are required to apply for official permission to the Cabinet of Ministers' Commission on International Technical Cooperation and the Economy Ministry. The measure drew criticism from the opposition. "It would be more logical to ban elections altogether," United Civic Party leader Anatol Lyabedzka commented on the decree. "Nongovernmental organizations and political parties will not be able to train observers and volunteers with assistance of trainers from Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine." However, Mikalay Astreyka, a coordinator of an election-observation network, said the decree will not affect so much election monitoring as internationally sponsored conferences. "Our election-monitoring system is based on volunteers who are not paid for their work," Astreyka said. "But the decree provides authorities with legislative tools against harmless seminars and conferences. In fact, it gives the authorities a free hand to take any action against civic society."

**Aug. 24, 2005**

#### **BELARUSIAN MATH TEXTBOOK INCLUDES ANTI-NATO, ANTI-U.S. RIDDLES**

A recently published book of math problems used in academic competitions for middle-school students in Minsk over the past 12 years contains ideologically charged conundrums directed against the United States and NATO, RFE/RL's Belarus Service reported on 23 August. The book includes substitution exercises such as "NATO + USA = WAR" (in Russian) and "NATO + GO HOME = PEACE." "Such rebuses are a normal human reaction to war, in this case -- to the war launched by the United States and other NATO countries against Serbia," Yauhen Barabanau, one of the authors of the textbook, told RFE/RL. "I don't think these rebuses have any political or ideological underpinning," he added. "We aren't going to think up anything regarding Iraq. Why? Serbia is an Orthodox country, dear to us. Our brothers live there. Therefore, we perceived that war as a war against us. It was painful. And Iraq or Iran -- it is not so painful for us."

**Aug. 29, 2005**

#### **TWO GEORGIANS TO BE DEPORTED FROM BELARUS FOR 'INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS'**

A KGB official said on Belarusian Television on 25 August that two detained activists of Georgia's Kmara youth organization, Giorgi Kandelaki and Luka Tsuladze, will be deported from Belarus in connection with their "interference in internal affairs" of the country (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 25 August 2005). "During their stay in the country, they made contacts with representatives of radical, politicized unregistered structures, such as Zubr, Youth Front, and Limon, and held a number of training seminars on the organization of civil-disobedience actions accompanied by mass unrest, similar to those during the colored revolution in Georgia," the KGB official explained. "They participated in a number of unsanctioned actions to disseminate illegal publications in the city of Minsk and intended to travel to a number of regions of the country with analogous purposes."

**Aug. 30, 2005**

#### **MINSK OPPOSED TO POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATION OF ETHNIC POLES**

Stanislau Buko, chairman of the Belarusian Cabinet of Ministers' Committee on Religious and National Affairs, suggested to Belapan on 29 August that the authorities would oppose the creation of another organization of ethnic Poles, in addition to the Union of Poles in Belarus (SPB). Buko said that an SPB convention last week, which was questioned by a faction of SPB activists

led by former SPB Chairwoman Anzhelika Borys, elected a lawful leadership. "Apart from this association, which has existed and will exist, I don't know any other organizations of Poles and there cannot be any of them. If we start playing politics, let's establish new associations of Poles, but we, as well as Poles, don't need politics," Buko said. Buko added that the government will provide financial support to the SPB. Buko's promise came after Polish media reported that Warsaw will cease financing the organization. Jolanta Danielak, deputy speaker of the Senate, Poland's upper house, told *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 29 August that Warsaw cannot provide financial support for the SPB after it was de facto placed under the Belarusian government's control.

**Sept. 7, 2005**

#### **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES 'LANDMARK' TALKS ON UNION WITH RUSSIA**

Alyaksandr Lukashenka said at a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov in Minsk on 6 September that he has agreed with Russian President Vladimir Putin to make radical progress during their upcoming meeting in November toward the development of the Russian-Belarus Union, BelaPAN reported. According to Lukashenka, his November meeting with Putin will be "significant, momentous, and landmark, particularly in furthering our unity." "We have agreed with Russian President Vladimir Putin that in November we will cardinally further the resolution of issues connected with the Constitutional Act of the union state," Lukashenka added. Meanwhile, Fradkov said in Minsk that the two countries will not switch to a common currency in January, as previously planned. "Only a few months are left, and we cannot do that technically," ITAR-TASS quoted Fradkov as saying.

**Sept. 12, 2005**

#### **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT WANTS OPPOSITION TO HOLD CONGRESS AT HOME**

Alyaksandr Lukashenka said on 9 September that he has advised the authorities in Minsk to assist the opposition in organizing a congress to nominate a presidential candidate for the 2006 presidential election, BelaPAN reported, quoting official sources. Lukashenka's announcement came in the wake of the opposition's complaints that it cannot find a venue in Belarus for holding such a convention and is considering the possibility of holding it abroad. "I have been informed that our opposition wants to be denied a place for holding the gathering in Belarus," Lukashenka said. "It is better for them to conduct it somewhere in Ukraine or Russia. The Russians have expressly refused, that is why they wanted to hold the congress in Ukraine. Kyiv agreed to host the gathering. As soon as I received the information, I recommended that our authorities offer them assistance in conducting the event, so that they will not make fuss abroad, in Ukraine, or Lithuania, or Poland that they are stifled here [and] not allowed to hold [the congress]."

**Sept. 13, 2005**

#### **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT WANTS TO SEE FIDEL CASTRO IN MINSK**

Meeting with outgoing Cuban Ambassador Felix Leon Carballo in Minsk on 12 September, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka asked that his best wishes be relayed to Cuban leader Fidel Castro, Belarusian Television reported. "If he [Castro] comes to Europe some day and manages to visit Belarus during such a trip, we will receive him as the closest and best [friend]," Lukashenka said.

**September 16, 2005**

## **BELARUSIAN PRESIDENT BEMOANS 'UNIPOLAR' WORLD.**

Speaking at a UN summit in New York on 15 September, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka said the breakup of the Soviet Union 15 years ago has upset the global balance and led to a "unipolar" world, Belarusian Television reported. "The Soviet Union, despite all the mistakes and blunders of its leaders, was the source of hope and support for many states and peoples," Lukashenka said. "Today the world is unipolar, with all the ensuing consequences: The once prospering Yugoslavia has been devastated and disappeared from the map of the world; the much-suffering Afghanistan has been turned into a hotbed of conflicts and drug trafficking; the bloody carnage in Iraq has been continuing until this day."

**Sept. 16, 2005**

## **...DEFENDS SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC, SADDAM HUSSEIN**

Lukashenka told the UN summit on 15 September that former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein are being unjustly held in captivity, Belarusian Television reported. "The heads of the sovereign states of Yugoslavia and Iraq have been imprisoned on uncorroborated, far-fetched, absurd accusations," Lukashenka said. "The trial of Milosevic has since long turned into a caricature. Saddam Hussein has been left to the winner's mercy, like in barbarian times. There is no one apart from the UN to defend their rights, since their countries do not exist any longer, they have been destroyed."

## **4. WORLD'S FOCUS ON BELARUS**

**July 8, 2005**

## **EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONDEMNS REPRESSION IN BELARUS**

The European Parliament on 7 July adopted a resolution condemning "indiscriminate attacks" on media freedom, "arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment of detainees, disappearances, and politically motivated persecution" in Belarus, Reuters reported. "Members of the European Parliament want the EU to take strong action against the Belarus regime for media persecution, and envisage a possible visa-ban list for implicated Belarus authorities," the resolution reads.

**July 25 2005**

## **GEORGE W. BUSH DECLARED SUPPORT OF BELARUSIAN DEMOCRATIC FORCES**

The President of the United States of Amerika George W. Bush supports process of uniting Belarusian democratic forces. American President told it the vice-chairman of BNF party Aliaksey Yanukevich in an informal meeting in the White House. "It was a meeting of party leaders of International Democratic Union. This organization unites rightist parties all over the world. Such meetings are held annually. This year it took place in Washington D.C. About 200 people took part. The other day we had a round table discussion in the White House, with George W. Bush in charge. Belarus was a very important issue of the discussion, and even the most important," — said the vice-chairman of BNF party Aliaksey Yanukevich who took part in the meeting. (Charter'97 Press Center)



*Aliaksey Yanukevich met Pres Bush*

**Aug. 9, 2005**

## **WARSAW ALLOCATES NEARLY \$300,000 TO FINANCE INDEPENDENT BELARUSIAN RADIO**

Polish Prime Minister Marek Belka on 8 August decided to earmark 950,000 zlotys (\$290,000) for the Polish nongovernmental organizations planning to create an independent Belarusian-language radio, Polish media reported quoting official sources. Last week the Polish Foreign Ministry confirmed that Warsaw has been conducting negotiations with Brussels and Washington on financing a radio station for Belarus that would broadcast from Polish territory.

**Aug. 19, 2005**

## **WASHINGTON DETERMINED TO SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY IN BELARUS**

The U.S. Embassy in Minsk announced on 18 August that the U.S. Department of State and the embassy will "continue to support a broad range of groups of individuals throughout Belarus whose goal is to promote the development of civil society, foster the growth of independent media, strengthen the social and health sectors, encourage the development of small and medium enterprise, and increase respect for the rule of law and human rights," BelaPAN reported. The statement came in the wake of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka's decree imposing further restrictions on foreign technical assistance in Belarus. In particular, the decree prohibits organizations and individuals from receiving and using foreign technical assistance for "preparing and conducting elections and referendums, recalling [legislators], staging gatherings, rallies, street marches, demonstrations, picketing, strikes, producing and distributing campaign materials, and for other forms of mass politicking among the population," according to the presidential press service.

**Aug. 22, 2005**

## **INTERNATIONAL PERSONALITIES APPEAL FOR DEMOCRATIZATION OF BELARUS**

A group of prominent public figures and former statesmen have called on the United States and Europe to combine their efforts in working toward democratizing Belarus, BelaPAN reported. The letter, published in the 19 August issue of the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard*, carries the signatures of former Czech President Vaclav Havel, former Irish President Mary Robinson, former German President Richard von Weizsaecker, former South African President Frederik W. de Klerk, and U.S. philanthropist George Soros, among others. The letter urges the European Union to make greater efforts to help democratize Belarus, provide Belarusian pro-democracy youth with access to European education programs, and open radio and television stations for broadcasting to the country.

Aug. 23, 2005

## BRUSSELS MOVES TOWARD STRIPPING BELARUS OF TRADE BENEFITS

Last week, the European Commission started a procedure of suspending benefits for Belarus under the EU's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). BelaPAN reported on 22 August. The commission has given the Belarusian government six months to bring the country's regulations into line with its international commitments and eight months more to carry out 12 recommendations of the International Labor Organization regarding the treatment of trade unions in the country. If the European Commission sees no progress on the recommendations in 14 months, it will request the EU Council of Ministers to temporarily abolish the GSP benefits for Minsk. According to the commission, the move would mean an annual loss of 100 million euros (\$122 million) for Belarus.

Sept. 12, 2005

## BRUSSELS ANNOUNCES TENDER FOR INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING TO BELARUS

The European Commission on 9 September officially announced a tender for organizing independent broadcasting to Belarus as of 1 January 2006. According to the EU's official website (<http://europa.eu.int>), interested broadcasters are required by 11 October "to signal their interest in a new contract for co-production and broadcasting on television and radio in Belarusian and Russian over a period of two years starting on 1 January 2006." The commission offers to support the project with 2 million euros (\$2.5 million). "I am deeply committed to helping the people of Belarus. The human rights situation in Belarus is deteriorating, and if the country is to find its way onto the path to democracy, the people need access to free media," EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner said on 9 September. "We have taken a very simple decision to deal with the project that will be covering broadcasting in the two national languages of Belarus and, whether you like it or not, there are two national languages in Belarus," EU spokeswoman Emma Udwin commented on the tender the same day. Brussels has earmarked a total of 8.7 million euros to support democracy and human rights in Belarus in 2006.

## Belarusians Abroad

### Harvard Symposium October 13-15, 2005

*The Arts, National Identity and Politics in Belarus'* symposium will be held at the Barker Center, Harvard University. Two sessions are planned:

**Session I** on Friday, October 14 at 3:30 PM will focus on the arts and national identity with participation of Arnold McMillin (University of London), Zina Gimpelevich (Waterloo University, Canada), Paula Survilla (Wartburg College, Iowa). Tom Bird of Queens College will be a discussant.

**Session II** on Saturday, October 15 at 10:00 AM will focus on national identity and politics with participation of Grigory Ioffe (Radford University, Virginia), Iryna Vidanava (Johns Hopkins University), Elena Gapova (European Hu-

manities University). Timothy Snyder of Yale and Vital Zajka of YIVO (Yiddish Institute Of Vilna Organization) will be the discussants.

On October 13 at 2:30 PM at the Fong Auditorium in Boylston Hall will be an opportunity to meet with members of the visiting Jakub Kolas Theatre from Viciebsk. It will be followed at 4 PM by the screening of "**Occupation: Mysterium**", a documentary banned by the current government in Belarus.

For additional details regarding the above program, please contact Dr. Curt Woolhiser [cwoolhis@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:cwoolhis@fas.harvard.edu).

## Jakub Kolas Academic Theater

*will give four performances at the Arsenal Center for the Arts, Watertown, Massachusetts, October 13-15, 2005*

On its first North American tour the Jakub Kolas Theatre will be performing two of their most popular pieces, Uladzimir Drazdou's "**Chagall... Chagall...**" and Sakrat Janovich's "**The Arrest**". Both plays will be performed in the original Belarusian with projected English supertitles. "Chagall" is the theatre's most internationally acclaimed and recognized production, having been performed at the East Goes West Festival in London; at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe where it was awarded the "Fringe First" award by the Scotsman; at the Espace Pierre Cardin in Paris at the behest of Mr. Cardin himself; at Mittelfest in Cividale del Friule, Italy; at the International Festival "Contact" in Torun, Poland; and at the Baltic Home Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia. *The Scotsman* writes: "'Chagall, Chagall...,' from Vitebsk in Belarus, is a staggeringly beautiful show about the early life of the artist Marc Chagall, as he remembers it in his dying moments. Born in Vitebsk in 1887, Chagall was entirely shaped as an artist by the life of the city's Jewish community and by his love for the little city he never left in his imagination.

The second production, "**The Arrest**," a unique example of the theatrical mastery of Artistic Director Vital Barkouski, is an exploration of Belarusian identity and the modern Belarusian experience based on episodes from the life of the Belarusian scholar, educator and political activist Branislau Tarashkevich (imprisoned by the Poles in the 1920s as a "Soviet agent," and later executed by the Soviets as a "Polish spy").

For more information about the Jakub Kolas Theatre's performances at the Arsenal Center, as well as about performances in other cities during the theatre's first North American tour, please contact the theatre's international manager, Mr. James Mallinson at [james@mallinsonarts.com](mailto:james@mallinsonarts.com), and visit the site of the Belarusian-American Association at [www.baza-belarus.org](http://www.baza-belarus.org).

The other performances will be held in New York on October 19, and in Cleveland on October 21, 2005.

## Interview with Marianne Samuelsson, the Governor of Swedish Gotland

Visby, Gotland, August 10, 2005

**By Andrej Kotljarchuk**

Exclusively for the *Belarusian Review*

**Editor's Note:** Gotland is an island in the Baltic Sea, located between Sweden's east coast and Latvia.

**Andrej Kotljarchuk (AK.):** Why did you decide to travel to Belarus? **Marianne Samuelsson (MS.):** We have been having wide ranging discussions to establish more contacts between Gotland and the Eastern Baltic countries. From a historical perspective, we have a Viking heritage on Gotland and, we know that during the Viking age and medieval times Gotland had very close contacts with Latvia and Belarus. We would like to learn more about our common past. From this we could see the beginnings of interesting endeavors such as a tourist project, connecting Gotland, Latvia and Belarus.

**AK:** How did you travel to Belarus?

**MS:** We took a plane to Vilnius and then went by car to Polatsk. Another part of our delegation traveled the same way to Polatsk via Riga.

**AK:** How many persons took part in this visit?

**MS:** There were 15 persons. Apart from the administration of Gotland there were scholars from the University of Gotland and the city of Norrköping.

**AK:** What are your impressions about Polatsk?

**MS:** It is a very interesting town surrounded by a very nice area. I am sure that this place would be interesting for Swedish tourists. A lot of things, which we are trying to make work here on Gotland, Polatsk already has accomplished. Even, for example, horse transport. It was very interesting to see how people have adapted this old way of transport for usage today. On Gotland we just started building special roads for horse transport and have been thinking of how to use them in the tourism business. So, we are just thinking about it, but when I came to Polatsk, we saw how Belarusians are already doing that.

Right now the main part of our focus is tourism. We are thinking also about different cultural projects - like the preservation of old ecological and architectural heritage. We noted the many interesting museums in Polatsk. There is even a Viking organization in Polatsk and we would be interested in having them visit our Viking festival in Gotland.

**AK:** Did you know about the old good contacts between Polatsk and Gotland before your travel?

**MS:** Yes, of course I knew about the contacts between Vikings and post-Vikings and Belarus. And, it was amazing to see so many artifacts from Gotland in Polatsk's museums. These things could help us to make Polatsk more attractive for Swedish tourists.

**AK:** The Polatsk National Park has an ambition to be the tourist center of Belarus. What do they need to do to achieve this aim? Gotland has very good experience in managing tourism. It was 26 years that you started from scratch the Medieval Week Festival in Visby. Now this is a first-class event that draws tourists from around the world.

**MS:** I think Polatsk should promote the real things that it already has. Of course you have to build a network of good and inexpen-

sive hotels. But I guess the main idea is to preserve the traditional culture, unique wooden houses, horse transport, and the beautiful Dzvinia River. For example, picture the transportation of tourists by horse carts around the beautiful Polatsk National Park could be excellent.

**AK:** You did not mention the unique Byzantium churches of Polatsk.

**MS:** Yes, but I think that what first attracts Swedish and Western tourists could be the natural setting. Living on a farm close to nature, efficiently and in harmony with nature - is very compelling. After Sweden joined the EU (in 1995) our agrarian sector changed very fast. You now need a very big farm to compete in the modern agricultural markets. This means hard times for the small farmers. Probably the only one way to help them to survive and make money is with ecological tourism.

**AK:** Speaking honestly a lot of these small farmers do not need the market economy. So tourism is only one way to help these people keep their homes.

**MS:** There is also another point. We have to keep our landscape living and functioning. This is more interesting. These settlements are 500 to 1000 years old.

Another good way to help the farmers also is to grow produce in an ecologically sensible way. Such produce is in high demand now in Europe. We started doing this on Gotland and it seems very successful. The same is possible to arrange in Belarus. And moreover we need to keep the Baltic Sea clean. Thus, I am very worried about the rapid industrialization of countries around the Baltic. Now people are leaving the countryside for the cities. The countryside is being deserted. You can't attract tourists to either an industrial or empty area. Ecologically sound agriculture that allows preservation of the natural landscape could be a good alternative. Some years ago farmers paid people to work on the farm. Today tourist people would like to pay to farmers to work with horses or pigs. Most of the people are living in the industrial, urban area and just sitting all day at their jobs. Thus, we have here the new potential to promote ecological tourism.

**AK:** What kind of people did you meet in Polatsk?

**MS:** Our contact organization was the State University of Polatsk; and a conference was held there. Also, we met people in local government. All of them are very interested in further cooperation.

**AK:** What is your opinion of the University of Polatsk?

**MS:** It is a very beautiful university with a very active and professional staff. Our University of Gotland has already formed contacts with Belarusian colleagues. Now we would like to improve our contacts.

**AK:** That's true. The University of Polatsk has a lot of talented scholars. When this university opened (1993) a lot of young ambitious scholars moved from Minsk to Polatsk. Now the university is going to move to reconstructed old buildings of the Polatsk Jesuit Academy.

As far as I understood the main idea of your trip was to incorporate Polatsk into your Gotland-Latvian project?

**MS:** Yes, just 15 years ago it was impossible. Now it is possible and coming true.

**AK:** How you are planning to organize the practical things?

**MS:** In the nearest future we are going to have regular ferry service between Gotland and Riga. After that it could be possible and easier for Swedish tourists to travel from Stockholm to Gotland

and from Gotland to Polatsk via Riga. And it could be fascinating, because for many Swedes Belarus is largely an unknown country and, I am sure there are lots of people who would like to see it.

**AK:** What kind of problems do you see in the way of future cooperation with Belarus? As far as you know Belarus is now an isolated country, not a member of EU. Moreover the political leaders of this country do not want to integrate Belarus into the European world.

**MS:** Yes, there are a lot of such problems. That's true - the present-day Belarus is outside of EU. There is a strict visa regime and transit control. It concerns both Swedes traveling to Belarus and Belarusians who would like to visit Sweden. However, with Latvia joining the Schengen zone the Latvian-Belarusian border became the Swedish-Belarusian one. It means that politicians of both countries should find some solutions to make contacts easier for our citizens because of economic interests.

**AK:** I agree with you. The closed border is not good for tourism. Thank you very much for the interesting conversation.

**MS:** Thanks for your coming and convey my greetings to all readers of your journal.

## Protest Action Against Lukashenka's Visit in New York

On September 14 activists of Belarusian diaspora have held a protest timed to the visit of Alyaksandr Lukashenka to the UN session. The action started at the 5th Avenue by the New York public library. Representatives of the diaspora came to the UN headquarters carrying white-red-white flags. They were holding placards and slogans; "We want free, independent, democratic Belarus!", "Stop Lukashenka's dictatorship!"

The action was remarkable as the Belarusians had managed to occupy the best place for picketing. The protesters were stranding right by the passage fenced for the press and UN officers. Everybody entering the UN building passed by the white-red-white flags and heard slogans: "Belarus - Yes, Lukashenka-No!"

The chairman of the Conservative Christian Party Belarusian Popular Front Zyanon Paznyak has taken part in the rally.

**Source:** Charter'97 Press Center, Sept. 15, 2005



## MEDIA WATCH

### PRESS REVIEW

**President of Belarus holds fast to Soviet way of life** - Those opposing Lukashenko's rule get the message (*San Francisco Chronicle*, by Anna Badkhen, Staff Writer, Thursday August 18, 2005 — From the city of Hrodna, Belarus come more reports from "on the ground" of the political oppression of the opposition through the courts and police. In this story the case of Andzelika Borys, a leader of the Polish minority, is highlighted. According to the article: "The prosecutors did not tell Andzelika Borys which laws she had violated, or what her punishment might be. They just told her that if she broke 'Belarusian law' again, she 'would be punished.'"

This, as the article points out is a warning "reserved for politicians, journalists, businessmen or anybody else who has irked the regime."

In the specific case of Borys, the oppression is also seen as a concerted effort to squelch the voice of the Polish minority and their organizations. The author writes: "Lukashenko has accused Poland of trying to help the United States try to topple his regime with the help of 20,000 members of the Polish association Borys once led in Hrodna."

And the reporter relates their impressions from a visit to Minsk as "like time travel back to the Soviet Union."

According to the author, while trying to keep the populace focused on the mundane, the state-controlled media also has a harsh message for those who might favor a change from the regime that movements like Ukraine's Orange Revolution of 2004 will be dealt with harshly. In Belarus it is reported that it would be a "Cornflower Revolution" — in reference to what is commonly referred to as Belarus' national flower.

Lukashenko sees any popular uprising against him as being a creation of "the Americans, the West," and has stated: "I want to warn you that ... we know how to stop the intervention."

And, the article points out that this stance is buttressed through Russia's backing.

The article recounts what the Bush Administration has already made clear: that "it would like to see a different government in Minsk. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has called Belarus 'an outpost of tyranny' and 'the last true dictatorship in the center of Europe,' and Congress wants to add \$5 million to Washington's annual \$7 million aid package to Belarus to increase U.S. assistance to the country's independent media, human rights groups and programs that promote civil society."

The article concludes with the quoted observation: "There is a great sense of Lukashenko fatigue — more and more people are becoming more frustrated," said a Western diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "But you don't get a sense that there's a great will of the public to protest. There's a lot of fear, a lot of levers the government can use to stop people from being politically active." And yet it is also noted in the article that a Gallup poll this summer showed that 48 percent of Belarusians believed Lukashenko should be reelected.

**Solidarity anniversary turns focus on Belarus** (*The Guardian*, by Ian Traynor, September 1, 2005 — According to the article, in a gathering to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the birth of Solidarity, “the presidents of Georgia and Ukraine, Mikhail Saakashvili and Viktor Yushchenko, were greeted with standing ovations as they declared that Solidarity’s example should inspire democracy activists in Belarus to topple the authoritarian president, Alexander Lukashenko, who expects to be reelected next year.”

Mr Saakashvili and Mr Yushchenko, “called for August 31 - the day in 1980 that the communist bloc’s first free trade union was born in a Gdansk shipyard — to be declared an international day of freedom and solidarity.”

According to the article: “To rousing applause, Mr Saakashvili said that following the Solidarity-led revolutions of 1989, the post-Soviet region was in the throes of ‘a second wave of liberation of Europe’. ‘I am sure there will be more. Freedom and democracy will prevail everywhere, including in Belarus,’ he said.”

Readers are reminded that it was Poland that “helped to mediate last year’s election crisis in Ukraine, earning the Kremlin’s hostility by helping to secure the triumph of Mr Yushchenko against the Moscow-backed presidential candidate.”

Janusz Onyszkiewicz, a former Polish defense minister who is now vice-president of the European parliament is quoted: “We’re hoping to Europeanise our policy,” and furthermore “That was the case with Ukraine and we hope it will be the same with Belarus. The aim is to bring an end to this anomaly, the dictatorship in Belarus. The EU can’t have a country like Belarus on its doorstep.”

The role of Russia in Belarus particularly in regard to one of its most vital interests, cashing in on rising energy prices, is mentioned. “Mr Putin is due in Berlin next week to finalize a gas pipeline project which would carry Russian gas across the Baltic Sea to Germany, Norway and Britain, bypassing Poland,” notes the author.

But it is reported that some Polish and German analysts “say the scheme is political rather than economic, enabling Moscow to blackmail the central Europeans by turning off gas supplies without jeopardising lucrative deliveries to western Europe.”

The article notes that while Western Europeans are not keenly attuned to the pressures and political drama to their east, the “Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians are suspicious of Moscow’s intentions and Georgians are seeking to establish ‘a new democratic coalition of states.’”

The article also recaps the major events in the Europe of the 1980’s relative to the history of the Solidarity movement.

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**European Union against Lukashenko — in Russian** (Prague daily *Lidove Noviny*, excerpts from an article by Katerina Safarikova, September 12, 2005) — European Commission is preparing to support with 2 million euros a radio station that would in January 2006 begin independent news broadcasting to Belarus, now oppressed by the regime of dictator Alexander Lukashenko. However, the Commission’s intention is already facing criticism by Europarlament deputies, who are disturbed by the plans to begin such broadcasts first in Russian, and only later in Belarusian.

It was Lukashenko himself who pushed through Russian as

an official language alongside Belarusian. “Broadcasting should be only in Belarusian. The Commission does not understand the situation in Belarus’ society. Lukashenko is intent on reducing Belarusian - the country’s native language to a status of a local dialect. He is using the Russian language as an instrument of his power,” explained the Polish conservative deputy Bogdan Klich, chairman of Europarlament’s delegation on Belarus, and one of the number of Poles who objected to broadcasts in Russian.

... Besides the matter of language, Poles are disturbed by the conditions of the announced tender for the broadcasting stations; the deadline is scheduled for October. Among other conditions the Commission requires that the interested parties operate with a minimal annual turnover of three million euros. The Polish deputies assert that this would eliminate the smaller competitors (including those from Poland) and the tender will be won only by big names like BBC or the German Deutsche Welle. The latter already won the initial competition for 138,000 euros, and in November will begin broadcasting daily 15-minute news fragments to Belarus — initially also only in Russian.

“The broadcasts should be rendered by Poles or Lithuanians, since we are closer to Belarusians than Western European media. However, the smaller Polish stations of this region do not boast the required annual turnover,” says Bogdan Klich.

\* \* \* \*

**Better Late than Never** (Newspaper BIELARUS, U.S.A, August 2005, by Elvira Bachar) — I was born and lived in the town of Navahradak (Horadnia oblast) for 15 years. In the spring of 2004 I learned that I was named as a participant in the FLEX (Future Leaders Exchange) student exchange program.

The middle of August of that year marked the beginning of an absolutely new life for me: I left my family and friends and moved to San Antonio, Texas. I expected many new and unusual experiences there. I had to get used to a new life style, to living with my new American family, to looking for good and reliable friends, etc.

But already now the time has gone by and in a few days I will be returning to Belarus. What can I say? For me, the program in the United States was fairly successful in every aspect. I think I have become more independent, mature and self-confident. My views on many things have also changed.

Before coming to the USA I was the typical, somewhat patriotic Belarusian. I was speaking mostly Russian and, since I thought that the Belarusian nation will soon disappear, I made no special efforts to preserve its culture. One couldn’t say that I did nothing at all: I could speak Belarusian fairly well and read Belarusian literary works. I visited Belarus’ historical sites and always discovered something new and interesting. I thought I did enough, in comparison with others. Now I grasped that the main elements of national consciousness were missing: the feeling of devotion to my homeland, unwavering patriotism, and especially a strong love of our native language.

I came to Texas as a Russian-speaking Belarusian but began to undergo a change while here. When someone called me a Russian, I resented it and never tired of trying to explain the difference. I began to listen to Belarusian music; and even began making my diary entries in Belarusian. The attitude of Americans to their country impressed me. It made me think: is Belarus worse? Why do all other peoples love and respect their country, culture and language, while my country is stifled by the ever-present

Russianness? New questions came up concerning the freedom of press. So did the outrage over the pro-Russian Belarusian TV.

During my stay in the United States I received great help and support from Ms. Orsa-Romano. The Belarusian diaspora regularly sent me the newspaper *Biellarus* and the *Belarusian Review*, which also contributed to increasing my knowledge and changing my views. I began feeling a patriotic spirit, and a pride in being a Belarusian with a Belarusian heart. Better late, than never, they say. America changed my views on everything around me. What I like most is the change of attitude concerning Belarus. Now I am more than confident in making further steps to assure a brighter future for my beloved homeland. Zvyie Biellarus! (Long live Belarus!)



## An Open Letter from Vera Rich

Dear friends – writers and lovers of Belarusian literature!

As some of you may be aware, there is currently a project to produce a CD of Belarusian literature in translation, to be produced under the auspices of UNESCO, with some kind of participation from the Janka Kupala library in Minsk.

Unfortunately, this will not, in my opinion, give an adequate representation of Belarusian literature, and although I have done my best at 'damage limitation', what seems to be a quite arbitrary time-limit has been imposed, and, alas, I can do no more. I am writing, therefore, not so much to apologize (for I have done all that was in my power – to the neglect of other work and commitments!) but to try to explain the situation.

Although I have been translating Belarusian poetry for almost 50 years, and am – I think – fairly well known to Belarusian literary circles, I first learned of this project (in a somewhat roundabout manner) only in late April, 2005.

I immediately tried to find out what was happening, and why I had not been informed (particularly since the person compiling the CD had been in touch with me on a number of occasions over the past few years).

In the course of the next few weeks, I discovered the following

- 1) The project was planned at least a year ago, at which time the Belarusian embassy in London was informed of it. However the letter containing this information was apparently put aside and ignored/forgotten.

- 2) The person who worked at the Janka Kupala Library who was supposed to be compiling the CD failed to return from a visit to Vilnia earlier this year, having apparently done little or no work on it.

- 3) The task of compiling it was then given to Svetlana Skomorokhova who was at that time busy completing her Candidate's dissertation. In the avtoreferat of her dissertation she wrote that the CD would be published in June 2005 (the original deadline). When I asked about this, she said that she had given this date only as a formality, for the sake of appearances, and in the full expectation that she would be allowed more time.

- 4) Later, however, she informed me that the UNESCO office in Moscow insisted that she should keep to the deadline of 21 June, or else pay a fine.

- 5) I approached Jim Dingley, the head of the Anglo-Belarusian Society, an organization devoted to the promulgation of Belarusian

culture in anglophone circles. He contacted Uladzimier Shchasny – head of Belarusian delegation in UNESCO... Shortly after this, Miss Skomorokhova reported that she had been given an extension of two weeks.

- 6) It appeared that the material she has acquired so far consists of translations done in the USSR, from Russian intermediate versions, by persons of no literary talents in English. They are accordingly of low quality, and abound in errors... and simply not a worthy representation of the beauty and subtlety of the originals.

- 7) It was impractical for me to get to Belarus to find out more just at this time. However, I was able to meet her over the weekend of 11-12 June in Vilnius. During this meeting, she told me that the idea of the CD is to include 'everything available'... prose and verse.. She said she wanted to include my translations from 'Like Water Like Fire!', and 'The Images Swarm Free' (and even some from Poems on Liberty). She also wanted to use my preface from Like Water Like Fire (suitably updated) as preface to the CD. I suggested that she should also include some of my translations which have been published in various literary magazines, and also various other high-quality translations which had been published by the Anglo-Belarusian Society – including Fr Alexander Nadson's translations of the Lives of St Euphrosyne and St Cyril of Turau, Dr Shirin Akiner's translations of Sakrat Janovic's 'Miniatures' etc. This she appeared keen to do, and has been in touch with Jim Dingley about this.

- 8) However, she insisted that there was no way we could get an extension of time. After I returned from Vilnius, I sent her all easily accessible translations (i.e. material I had on file in my computer), and she e-mailed me the proofs of the poems from 'Like Water Like Fire' to check. (This is a matter of some 300 pages of poetry.. and checking this is a major task). It was not only a matter of checking for typographic errors – some poems needed emending because of changes in the English language in the past 30 years – e.g. 'gay' which used to be an appropriate rendering of 'viasioly' now means 'homosexual'.

- 9) Moreover, in the course of checking the proofs, I realized that since my translations were first published, a number of the poems had been substantially emended by the authors. In certain cases, extra lines had been added (Viarcinski's 'Every Fourth One' is now more than three times the original length!). I realized I needed to check every poem against the Belarusian text that will be used in the CD, even with the classics, since in some cases (e.g. Bahdanovic), there are differences between the versions which were given me in the 1960s and those published in the past few years

On 20 June I received some of the Belarusian texts (down to the letter H (Latin Alphabet). The rest were promised for next day, but never arrived.

- 10) Since my translations preserve – as far as humanly possible – the rhythm and rhymescheme of the originals, emending these texts is not a matter of a few minutes. I continued to urge Miss Skomorokhova to press for more time. She said, however, that the UNESCO office in Moscow was now insisting on a deadline of 1 July for the delivery of all texts to them. During the next few days, she informed by e-mail that Shchasny was now talking of an edition of only 200 copies of the CD which will be 'non-commercial'... and that a better version could be done later... Later, this became 50 copies now ('to satisfy UNESCO') and an improved version in September... However, I cannot help fearing

that he was saying this simply to calm her down. Moreover, I do not know what he meant by 'non-commercial' - but if he meant free distribution to university libraries etc... then those are surely precisely the kind of recipients who should not be sent inadequate versions. However, if Shchasny's two-stage scenario really is going to be implemented - then it seems evident to me that the 1 July deadline was entirely arbitrary...

11) I have done what I can... But my time and strength are limited... and as the deadline approaches, I realise that I have not been sent the proofs of certain authors from 'Like Water Like Fire', which may simply be an oversight (but could just possibly involve considerations of 'Political correctness'!)

12) As far as my own reputation is concerned, I am not particularly eager to have my work published in conjunction with the shoddy products of the Soviet era. However, for the sake of Belarusian literature, I felt, and indeed feel, that it is important that the CD should contain at least some work of reasonable quality. And, in particular, I have tried to take into account the emendations that poets themselves have introduced into their work - or, in the case of the classics, to work with the texts which current scholarship considers the most authentic.

Time, however - an artificially imposed time- constraint - has defeated me...

I have done what I could... Forgive me that I could do no more.

Vera Rich

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I wish invite you to the following conference that will be held in Bremen, October 13-16, 2005:

**Politics with History and Collective Memory in Public Discourses in East Central Europe.**

Yours, Ruediger Ritter

For more information, please contact:

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(Editor's note: In addition to scholars from Germany, Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, the following Belarusian panelists are also taking part: Hienadz Sahanovich, Jauhien Miranovich, Viachaslau Shved)

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I am a student from Freiburg, Germany. I am studying New History, Political Sciences and Slavonic Languages at the Freiburg University.

At the moment I am writing a paper about measuring democracy in Belarus and I would like to ask you for more information.

Sincerely yours, Anna Leidinger

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My name is Jessica Bestwick. I come from Bathurst in Australia and I am 15 years old. I am a member of the cast of a Rock eistedfodd Production that is capturing the horror of Chernobyl and presenting it to Australia through dancers.

I am writing to thank you for opening my eyes to what I am really dancing for. It is to give a voice to those that have been affected by Chernobyl.

Yours sincerely, Jess

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